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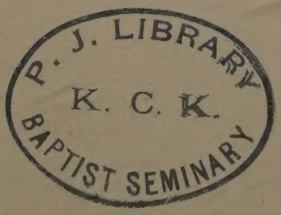
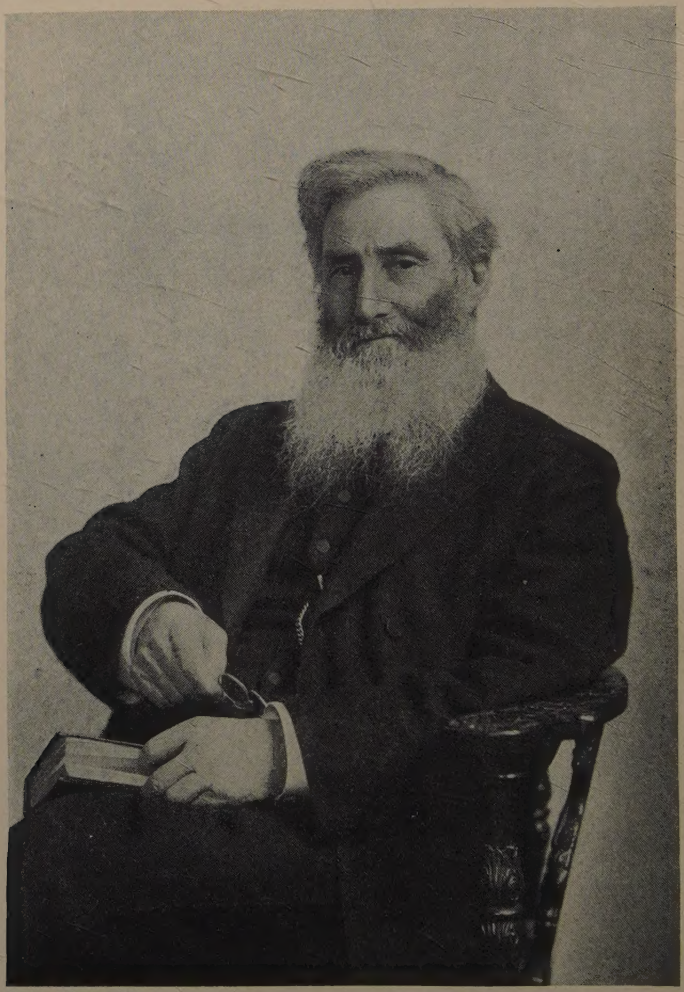


FRANÇOIS COILLARD

A WAYFARING MAN



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FRANÇOIS COILLARD

After forty years in Africa

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FRANÇOIS COILLARD,

A WAYFARING MAN

By

EDWARD SHILLITO

LITERARY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY

AUTHOR OF

"THE OMEGA" AND "JESUS OF THE SCARS"

title

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS volume is the third of a uniform series of new missionary biographies.

The series makes no pretence of adding new facts to those already known. The aim rather is to give to the world of to-day a fresh interpretation and a richer understanding of the life and work of great missionaries.

A group of unusually able writers are collaborating, and three volumes will be issued each year.

The enterprise is being undertaken by the United Council for Missionary Education, for whom the series is published by the Student Christian Movement.

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PREFACE

FRANÇOIS COILLARD is not one of the missionaries who needs to be rescued from the neglect of his own generation; on the contrary it may be claimed that no modern apostle has been happier in the devotion of his friends. And he had himself the power to share with others through his pen the story of his wanderings and his achievements, of his triumphs and his failures. The present writer makes no claim to add to the material already available for the study of Coillard; that has been gathered and arranged already by able and loyal hands; and to the biographers who have made this book possible he must express first of all his sincere admiration and his unfailing gratitude.

It was in the reading of *Coillard of the Zambesi*,[1] by Miss C. W. Mackintosh, that many first discovered this apostle, and the writer owes to that book a very great debt. In 1897 Coillard's journals of one period of his life were translated into English under the title, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*.[2] Among the stories of missionary travel and adventure this book must be ranked with the journals of Livingstone; it is written with that peculiar intensity and frankness which marked Coillard, and with a vividness of style which makes it a perpetual delight.

The Paris Missionary Society to which Coillard belonged has not failed to do justice to its noble servant. M. Edouard Favre has written in three volumes a masterly biography. If a member of another nation may venture to say so, this work is

[1] Published in 1907; now out of print.
[2] Out of print; obtainable from libraries.

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one of distinction even in the shelves of French biography; the vast materials are arranged with that feeling for order and proportion, and the story is written with that regard for style, for which we never look in vain to the French. Mention should be made of the abridged biography by the same writer published in 1922; and of the smaller popular and excellent account by M. Dieterlen. Unfortunately none of these volumes have been translated into English.

It is not so much the purpose of this "modern series" of biographies to compile new material, as to set free for a younger generation the distinctive gifts of the modern apostles whose memories may recede as those who knew them leave this scene. There is always in every biography much that is temporary; the accent and idiom belong to one period; and if the story is to be prolonged it must be retold and in some ways reinterpreted for each generation.

If this study reveals to those who have their life to give, the character of François Coillard, and something of the work which his Saviour wrought through him, it will achieve its purpose. It tells the story how a French peasant, timid and quiet by nature, became an apostle to two tribes in Africa, and how, after many wanderings, the wayfarer rests by the Zambezi. It is a tale of surprises, for, as Coillard loved to say, when you are dealing with God you never know what is going to happen next.

EDWARD SHILLITO

Buckhurst Hill, Essex
April 1923

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD IN ASNIÈRES

I should not mind to die for them,
My own dear downs, my comrades true,
But that great heart of Bethlehem
He died for men he never knew.

And yet, I think, at Golgotha
As Jesus' eyes were closed in death
They saw with love most passionate
The village street at Nazareth.

HILTON YOUNG.

MEMORIES of childhood commonly group themselves around some one scene, which becomes prophetic of all that is to follow. There the master-theme is thrown out in anticipation, to be taken up later. Life in retrospect seems but the unfolding of that one moment. Then it is that the child receives the thought of himself, which remains. To François Coillard as he recalled the past, his early childhood seemed to find its centre in the evenings when wandering evangelists came on their rounds to the cottage in Asnières-les-Bourges, where his mother lived. In that village near the heart of France where the vines grow there were serious people, who loved to welcome these humble men with their Bibles and sacred songs and accordions. Lit by the smoky light of a resinous torch—the candle of the poor—they would speak of the Word and read from its pages, but it was their singing

that lived deepest among the memories of the boy; their songs started echoes in his mind which never died away, for his life was destined to go to music.

Those were days of awakening in the Protestant Churches of France. The freshness of a new discovery of the Divine Love rested upon them. A dim and yet joyful sense of a mysterious Lord, who had sought them and bound them to Him, was in the hearts of the group gathered in the upper room of that cottage; and they sang as men always sing when they know for themselves the tremendous Lover. The Songs of Zion of César Malan were new in that day; full of freshness, hope and joy, the pioneer evangelists taught them from village to village. After years of coldness and formality, the breath of God had breathed upon these happy believers.

As a child Coillard sat on the knees of such men of God as they told their stories; and he learned songs from them which were always dear to him:

C'est toi, Jésus, que recherche mon âme,
A te trouver se bornent mes souhaits:
C'est ton regard que sur moi je reclame
Rends-moi, Seigneur, rends-moi ta douce paix.

The nearest equivalent to this will be the words of our hymn,

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.

The closing lines of Malan's hymn tells where the accent lay in that happy circle upon which the child's eyes opened:

A Golgotha mon âme te fut chère,
Je compte, ô Dieu, sur ta fidélité.

At Golgotha my soul was dear to Thee,
I count, O God, on Thy faithfulness.

Another of these hymns was the one which his mother taught François to say in his evening prayer, "Source de lumière et de vie" (Spring of life and light to me). "When I grow up," said the boy, "I will have an accordion and sing the songs which these men are singing."

In a tiny cottage Coillard's mother lived with her youngest child. A peasant, and the son of a peasant, the boy came of a Huguenot stock. A Frenchman, a peasant, a Protestant! Such was his inheritance, and down each line there came gifts out of the living past.

France gives to her sons no middle way between faith, and the denial of faith. There are two answers to the tremendous claims of the Christian religion: *Yea* or *Nay*. Their quick sensitive minds are intolerant of tepid compromises. To France the student goes whenever he desires to have spiritual issues sharply defined. He will hear in that tongue the proud defiances shouted by the faithful, and the fierce battle-cries of the enemies of the Faith; and with the passionate quest for reality in thought there goes the conviction that the expression which is given to a truth is itself part of the truth. Whoever takes a pen in hand to serve the truth has not fulfilled his task till he has given to it its perfect form.

The peasant in France enters into an inheritance of toil and frugality: but he has for his reward the

comforts and joys of the countryside; he has the round of the seasons to keep and all the kindly sacraments of seed-time and harvest. He lives for the most part in one place "between the same hedges, before the same horizon"; and those who leave the fields and vineyards carry the country-heart with them into the city or into the forests and plains of Africa. The French peasant has his interpreter in the pictures of Jean François Millet, who has shown that by the sweat of his brow this peasant knows he must win his bread, but in the struggle he has within his inmost heart the terrible and sweet influences of Mother Earth.

But there is nothing more significant in the sources of Coillard's life than the fact that Calvin had studied law at Bourges and for three centuries a Protestant community had never ceased to give its witness in that region. Bourges was the seat of a Roman archbishopric; Councils had been held there; it was there in 1528 that the doctrines of the Reformers were condemned root and branch. But the Huguenot strain did not cease. Its members were closely linked together by their memories of heroic days; they were all cousins to each other. They told from father to son how in the days of persecution their forefathers had assembled by night in the woods. Nor were there wanting stories of the martyrs to kindle loyalty to the village church.

But to be a Protestant in Asnières was to be in the minority, sharply divided from the Roman Catholics. There were two quarters in the village; and there was little fellowship between them, and sometimes the ancient hostility blazed afresh. To

the end of his life Coillard never knew what it meant to be with the majority ; his earliest memories carried him back to a scene in which sides had to be taken ; and they who were loyal to the Protestant Church must remain with the despised few. In Asnières there were two peoples, and as far as fellowship was concerned, two religions. A boy was either a Romanist or a Protestant ; and there was no more passing from one camp to the other than there is in Ireland. Coillard belonged to the Protestant Church ; within that he awakened, and lived out his spiritual life.

He was born on July 17th, 1834, the youngest of eight children. His father had a position of comfort, but when the boy was two and a half years old he died, leaving his widow at fifty years of age in grave straits. To meet the obligations to which her husband had pledged himself—good-natured, easy-going as he was—she had to sell almost all she had, and live in a tiny cottage. She was a noble woman, rich in patience and courage, and in the homely wisdom which owes little to books ; and her love never failed. She was known in the village as "Mother Kindness" (la Mère Bonté).

In the cottage she had preserved out of the wreck her beds—so high that a chair was needed for the ascent—her wardrobe, a trunk, a kneading-trough, each with its history. The cottage had a large fireplace, a small window, a little stable for a cow and a goat, a loft for the corn, a hen-house, a cellar, and a barn shared with the neighbours. Mother Kindness had left to her a little land, some vines, and a meadow. But these had to be cultivated,

and harvests were poor. In this battlefield she fought a brave fight for her boy. "It is no disgrace to earn our living," she would say; and every morning she went out to labour among the vines. Sometimes at nightfall after a hard day the boy would hear her sobbing in the dimly-lighted room. They were alone; the older members of the family had left for service, and to enter upon the bitter struggle for bread, and Mother Kindness had to fight her own battle to keep a home for her boy. Everyone in the district knew of her struggle, and no one was more respected than she. It was in an atmosphere of toil and want that Coillard spent his childhood, but that atmosphere was softened by the strong and patient love of his mother.

For a time the struggle ended in defeat; Mother Kindness had to leave Asnières to take a post as housekeeper and farm-wife at Foëcy, fifteen miles away. François was six by this time, old enough to mind the turkeys: "I read to myself in the fields for I could read already, and I read and re-read the only book I possessed—one of the Gospels." After two years, however, enough money had been saved to allow the mother and her boy to return to Asnières. It was important to go back for the boy's sake since there was a good Protestant school in that village, and she had dreams already of seeing him in the ministry. The French Protestant Church has many historic links with the Scottish kirk; and the longing of the Frenchwoman for her boy to be a minister was one that Mother Kindness shared with many a Scots mother. But if François was ever to reach the pulpit, he must have the schooling which Asnières could give.

The village schoolmaster, M. Viéville, had a zeal for education, and won the affection of his scholars. A modest man of few words, he took his work seriously, and was in touch with all that was most living in the Protestant Church. François was a studious boy, not given to games, caring rather to take his books away and read. He was a grateful soul, who loved like Marcus Aurelius to recount his debts to parent, friend, or master, and among these benefactors he gave a place of honour to the schoolmaster.

There had been during the years the Coillards spent in Foëcy one change in the village of far-reaching importance to this story; a new pastor had come, one of a family which has left its mark upon the Protestant Churches of France. M. Ami Bost and his family were already established in the village when the Coillards came back, and they threw into the intellectual and spiritual life of the boy vast, unexplored territories. Two of the boys of the family went to the village school. François became their friend, admitted into their family circle; to them he was "little Coillard"; to the village, among the Protestants, "little cousin"; and to his mother her "little child"; to all of them he was "little," and the adjective tells clearly the impression left by him when he was eight or nine years of age.

M. Ami Bost had found the church in a drowsy state. "Looking back," wrote Coillard, "he produces on my memory the effect of a powerful battery brought to bear on our lethargic vine-dressers." Much as an old Puritan pastor in New England he would name a sleeping member of his

congregation and by his ridicule would drive him into better ways. Once in order to teach the virtue of punctuality he locked the door of the chapel when the service began and some of the grave seniors were left outside. They shook their heads a little over these ways, and being accustomed to long sermons they suspected M. Bost of some unknown heresy because he preached for only ten minutes! But Ami Bost was not content with preaching to his flock; he was a social reformer who sought to improve the dwellings of the poor, and with his boys he led a gallant attempt to improve the roads. He was a good fighting man moreover, and was able to draw even an Archbishop into the arena of controversy. But it was not on this side of his gifted nature that he moved François most deeply. It was once more by music that the boy's path was beset. M. Bost was an accomplished musician, who had come from Alsace where Lutheranism was the prevailing form of Protestantism, and with him he brought musical innovations which seemed to some of the elders "just Popery," a reproach always at hand for innovations. To François the Bost family brought the evidence of deep piety in a setting of strenuous toil, all going to music. In their witness the Protestant communities had forgone their share in other arts, but they still had music. In this circle the boy discovered a love for true learning, a sensitiveness to the beauty of music, and a ceaseless outgoing of tender and courageous service.

Ami Bost was the master influence in that home, but it was Marie, his daughter, who left the deepest mark upon Coillard. The father was not loved

by the Catholics in Asnières, but all the village adored Marie; for her there were no barriers. She brought into the life of the youth of the village a light and a glory which years later in the memory of the missionary rested still upon the village street. Yet the things which she did do not seem remarkable to read. Meetings for young people, where they learned new songs, were arranged by her; but these are what they are made. She seems indeed to have had the power of a loving nature to fill other lives with new interests and joys. "One loving heart sets another on fire." They called her "Mademoiselle le pasteur"; and Coillard confessed that he had seen no influence in any way like hers. There was nothing morose or melancholy in her strong piety; all her being radiated joy. When the tale of debts was told, Coillard could not forget her. She more than others helped the little boy to know what the love of God could mean: in the preparations for his calling, there was a place for her. She died in her youth, but not before she had done work that will last in the Kingdom of God.

The Bost family was full of missionary enthusiasm. Marie would tell her friends at their evening meetings stories from the mission field of Moffat and others then breaking new ways into dark lands. Or sometimes at a walnut-bee where they met from house to house to crush the walnuts, she would read to them of the martyrs of old and of the living pioneers of the Cross. But all the golden memories of song and tale told at eventide, or of picnics in the woods, seem to be crowned by the Christmas of 1844. M. Bost had been away for some time.

To give him a surprise Marie taught her class the *Gloria* and the *Magnificat* to a setting which her father had written, but had never heard rendered by a choir. That was the one surprise. But the Bosts too had prepared a surprise. There had been secret preparations in the hall of the school. When the evening came, and the doors opened, there were lights flashing like stars fallen from heaven among the dark branches of a Christmas tree, laden with bon-bons and a thousand wonderful things. "It was like a reflection of the glory which burst upon the shepherds on that memorable night when the angels with their songs escorted to the bounds of earth the Saviour of men." It was the first Christmas tree among the Protestants of Asnières. Then at a signal the *Magnificat* was sung and the pastor had his surprise; and when later in the evening, after the gifts had been distributed, they sang his *Gloria*, the pastor who often seemed stern was motionless as a statue, then bowing his head in his hands he wept.

Trifling memories of a boy ten years of age! But it was by such experiences as these that the heart of the youth was prepared for the loneliness and terrors of the African forest. As Florence Nightingale used to hear in her hospital in Scutari the murmur of the Derwent by whose banks she had spent many hours in her youth, so Coillard by the Zambezi went back to the songs of his childhood, and lived again those rapturous hours, and beheld again the village street. To him the ministry of his own life was but an extension of that ministry in which it had been given to him to share in boyhood. There were "august antici-

pations" in those days. He was already being claimed; though years were to pass before the claim was perfectly understood and accepted.

When Samuel Bost, the missionary, came to speak in the village chapel, and showed certain idols worshipped by the heathen, François said, "How splendid to be a missionary!" From that time the idea was never entirely lost. It is not uncommon to find the impulse to be a missionary where no definite Christian decision has yet been made. The wish to be a missionary sometimes comes before the wish to be a Christian. There are many disciples waiting for a master.

But the days of childhood merged swiftly into youth. The Bosts left the village. It was a public calamity. The villagers, who had learned to trust their austere and yet tender-hearted pastor, went home when the farewell was over feeling like orphans. Not long afterwards, in 1848, the hour of revolution struck throughout Europe; thrones were tottering; dreamers were singing the end of tyrannies—prematurely, as it soon appeared. The Republic was proclaimed in France, and there was complete anarchy. The movements in the life of nations touched the little village; bands of Communists roamed over the country pillaging and burning the country seats, mills and farms, and volunteers armed with forks and scythes patrolled Asnières. Among them was François, so that it was commonly said in the village, "our little cousin is brave!"

The days of childhood for François ended with the terrible days of famine which fell after that

time upon the countryside. "One evening," he wrote, "my poor mother burst into tears and said, 'My poor little boy, I am beaten, I can struggle no more; we shall die of hunger.'" The boy was fourteen now (1848) and must go out to work. The new minister at Asnières spoke of him to a wealthy lady who had lately come to the castle at Foëcy. She took the boy into her service there, but under a certain misunderstanding. The mother and the pastor imagined that she was willing to let him have opportunity for study, and François dreamed of books; in reality he was to be an apprentice to the gardener. His service at Foëcy was a time of bondage; early and late the boy was a drudge and the days were not made easier by the jealousy of the gardener. When it was winter and the owner had left for Paris, François was driven to despair; he was ill-clad, and lodged in a garret, into which the winds and the frosts penetrated. He wrote at last to his employer; the reply brought his instant dismissal. These two years he used to call his "years of slavery."

In the record of his inner life one thing must be noted; at Foëcy the boy took his first Communion. He had not felt the need for conversion, but, as he said, this Communion was to him a "diploma of religion."

There was never a time in Coillard's life when he could forget religion; but after the fervours of childhood he had now come to the troubled experiences of youth; and something was lost for a time. His life had been surrounded by the ardent piety of others; he had derived from them his own thoughts and desires. There was now to be a

period of unrest before he made his own by root of heart the realities of which he had heard. He was proud of his Huguenot origin; he had loved the stories of heroes who had withstood tyrants; he had understood the conditions of this earthly scene according to the Christian Faith; he admitted that in it a decision had to be made, and by their choice men took their place not for time only. On the one hand were the servants of the Lord sharply defined from the others. They had accepted His will on His conditions, which meant on no conditions at all. On the other hand were the stubborn and defiant, who had refused the invitation. In the school of faith to which Coillard belonged there was no third position. He had been trained in the school to which the Wesleys had belonged, and the Haldanes in Scotland, and the founders of the great missionary societies. There was no hesitation in their interpretation of life; variations in detail there might be but the way was always the same; and for every man soon or late, the hour of decision must come.

Coillard knew this; but now he was to pass through the experience of one who knew the order of the redeemed life, and yet a little sullenly refused to make it his own.

The God of his childhood, radiant and gracious, seemed to recede in the mind and heart of this boy; he felt that God was hiding from him. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, it is said by students of the history of the soul that the soul often passes through a tunnel, in which it is lost to sight. Into that tunnel Coillard passed at Foëcy. To those who knew him he was never

anything but an entirely virtuous and serious character. But the great strength of the school of piety in which he was trained lay in its refusal to allow its children to rest content with anything less than a personal surrender to the Divine Will. François could never be deceived for long; he had seen what a life might mean when it was set at the disposal of God; he had known Ami Bost and Marie and others within their world of light—he had seen this too clearly ever to mistake semblances for realities. If he was tempted to forget, he had but to remember the simple songs of the wandering preachers and the winter evenings when Marie Bost had told them of the modern apostles, and had sung with them the happy songs of the redeemed. That was the reality; and the memory of it was a safeguard through the troubled years of youth.

The Evangelical school — like every school of piety—has its critics: it sometimes made its children morbid and introspective; it was individualistic; it thought too little of the redemption of society; through its weaker teachers it called men to take to the boats and leave the ship. These charges may be true in part; but they cannot obscure the overwhelming sense of God in Christ Jesus which the Evangelicals enjoyed. Coillard was beset from the beginning by the ambushes of this God and threatened by His love. In the hour when he first awakened to the fact that there was a François Coillard, he learned too that there was God. It came to him in the order of experience to lose something of the glory derived from others. He lost Him for a season that he might have Him for ever.

CHAPTER II

THE UNFORESEEN WAY

Yet he [Mr Fearing] would not go back.
And the nights were long and cold then.
The Pilgrim's Progress, Part II.

From Foëcy Coillard passed into the service of an English clergyman named Kirby, who occupied the Castle of La Ferté Imbault and the thirty farms comprised in the manor. There he was kindly treated and was considered more as one of the family. Mr Kirby was good-natured and generally liked; his wife was a strange blend of severity and kindness. But François still had little leisure for books in the day-time; and he had a passion for reading. There was no alternative but to steal from the hours of sleep. Mr Kirby lent him books.

I occupied [he wrote] a room shut away in a tower, and in order to be sure of hearing the big clock in the hall, and not to be late in the morning, I used to sleep with the door open. But more than once it happened that they caught me studying at an unreasonable hour; at other times—a more serious matter—they found me asleep over my books, and this drew upon me scoldings well deserved.

With a natural hesitation to allow their castle to be burned, his employers reprimanded the boy, and when that was in vain, they took away all his books but the Bible.

Perhaps it was thought, alas! with too great probability [he wrote], that I would not spend long hours in reading it. But I lighted upon a collection of hymns, which did not belong to me, and I set myself not only to read them and to learn them by heart, but also to copy them.

The Kirbys, finding threats were useless, did an unusual but sensible thing. They saw that all the boy's tastes were in another direction; and instead of sending him about his business or forcing him into the domestic service for which he was not fitted, they consulted with his pastor and the schoolmaster of his village. The episode of his domestic service has its place in the story; but in the lives of the saints it must be rare to find obstinate disobedience prove a passport into a true vocation. But the Kirbys were wise enough to ignore the superficial side of things. It was M. Viénot, the schoolmaster, who hit upon the plan of sending François to Glay. He had come from that Montbéliard district in which Glay is to be found. In that place among the Jura mountains there was an institution founded in order to enable poor boys to study who were destined for service as teachers, evangelists, pastors, or missionaries.

The story might have ended very differently, but there were good reasons for believing, as Coillard believed, that he was a man marked for a task, and pursued by his Lord. He was certainly finding it hard to kick against the goad.

Calls had come to him in the years of his domestic service; in 1850 he lost a sister whom he loved, and her death moved him greatly. Death used to move men in those days; they could not forget

the last words which came from the lips of their beloved; "that which they last put heart into" was peculiarly sacred. His dying sister gave him her Bible and besought him with tears to give himself to the Lord. That scene prepared him for the great choice. In after years it was recalled by Coillard that on the last Sunday he spent at Asnières an appeal was made for the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. That Society was busy upon the task of calling the youth of the Church into its service. After the sermon he spoke to his mother of the possibility that he might be a missionary; the appeal had gone like an arrow to his heart. "My child," said la Mère Bonté, "become what you like but not a missionary; you would be lost to me." It was not at the time more than a momentary wish; to be a missionary was in his eyes to be an apostle, and he had not the presumption to imagine that he was of the stuff out of which apostles are made. His fancy dwelt rather upon the quiet life of a scholar with an income enough for him to take care of his mother.

When Coillard arrived at Glay in 1851 he was seventeen. It was there that the period of his defiant and proud resistance came to an end. Some may apply to the stages of the way which he followed the language of the mystics and speak of purgation, illumination, and union. The men from whom Coillard learned the truth did not use such language. They spoke of conviction of sin, regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. Coillard came to know with the confidence of experimental religion what these words mean. They sound abstractions to our generation; but they meant realities, unutterably

sacred and wonderful, to Coillard as they had to Luther and Calvin, to Cromwell and Bunyan, to Carey and Moffat.

It was at Glay that he passed out of the coldness and defiance in which he had been for long; reminders and prophecies of the one thing missing had visited him; and he had a great longing for deliverance. A youth, counted by his fellows a serious person, he knew himself to have come to the place where two roads meet; he was being drawn to the hour when every familiar sign told him that he must choose. The crisis was at hand.

The motto over the door of the Institution at Glay—*The Eternal will provide*—showed its character. M. Jaquet, the Head, was a man of prayer and faith; and he too had his place in the preparation of Coillard. François was happy now in his freedom for study; and in his preparation for some calling which would satisfy his nature. Glay itself was set under the mountains "like a nest in the depths of a valley, calm and enchanting in its freshness." When in after years Coillard recalled this episode in his life he dwelt upon his spiritual hungers and sorrows, but he did not forget that there was another side to that life—an opening up of his being to the beauty and peace of a new world. The very countryside in which he had spent his captivity was sombre and depressing; but the Jura country was a land of endless charm with its towering rocks and its green hill sides, its winding streams and its sunny pastures. Nor was it less home-like because in the villages of that country there were two spires, one of the Catholic Church, the other of the Protestant.

They still keep at Glay an old table under which Coillard wrote these verses :

Exauce donc ton pauvre enfant
Qui vers toi pousse sa prière
Remène-moi dans la chaumière
Où j'ai passé mes premiers ans.

(Hearken then to this poor child, who utters his prayer to Thee ; lead me back into the cottage, where I spent my early years.) This does not mean that Coillard was always pining for home. Unfortunately youth is always serious in the presence of a diary ; and the jolly episodes are left unrecounted. The days at Glay were full of toil and study, but they were neither joyless, nor narrow in their interests. The pupils took prayers and read in turn at meals, and after supper their father in God, M. Jaquet, would make them read missionary stories and biographies, or when a new book, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, came out that would be read in these family gatherings. It was not all work at Glay ; sometimes they climbed the hills with M. Jaquet, and sang their songs of praise as they looked over the vast panorama.

Coillard was a sensitive Frenchman ; there are two Frances, it has been said, the France of Voltaire, and the France of Pascal. Coillard belonged to the France of Pascal—the land in which with all the relentless logic of the spirit men take sides ; and just as Pascal has told the undying story of his own spiritual struggles, and how he entered into peace, so Coillard after his own manner has told his story.

There were two old servants in the household at

Glay, peasant women who had been brought into the Christian life through M. Jaquet, and had offered their services when he established his training school. They were known according to the custom of the countryside as "Tante" (Aunt) Catherine and "Tante" Frêne. In the depth of the winter "Aunt" Frêne was stricken down by a grave illness. François volunteered to go through the woods for the doctor; he feared the wolves and ran all the way. "Aunt" Frêne reminded him of his own mother, and when, after some months, her hour to die came he was deeply moved. She asked for a hymn and sang it with the students; the sight of her radiant joy and serenity in the pains of death stirred Coillard to the depths. Once more it was the well-worn scenery of death which spoke to him. She died in June 1852, and they laid her to rest upon the summit of the mountain:

> It was evening. The shadows were lengthening; the hymns, mingled with tears, the urgent appeal which followed, the look which sank into the gloomy valleys at our feet and lost itself afar off upon the summits of Lomont still lit by the last fires of the luminary which was vanishing on the horizon, could not but impress me vividly. For me the present also was wrapped in the shadows of night, but the glory of Calvary did not shine yet upon my eyes.

On the following Sunday, M. Jaquet took the service. He was no preacher, and Coillard used to wonder that the good folk could come to hear him. Many saints are poor preachers; M. Jaquet was peculiar in the fact that he knew his weakness. That day François would have liked, had he dared, to stop away. The hymns were almost unendurable

that morning; and the poor youth with his heart sore and wounded scarcely knew how he could bear a sermon. But M. Jaquet instead of preaching read a tract. It was indeed a sermon by Bishop Ryle of Liverpool with the title *The Wheat and the Chaff*. Those who have survived the story of a death-bed and a funeral will find it hard to endure a tract! But let them be patient. Tracts like other things must be judged by what they do. There is virtue in a tract which can fling open the gates of new life to a sorrowful soul, and, through him, release in the heart of pagan tribes the message of hope and life. Years afterwards Coillard met with the aged Bishop of Liverpool and told him of the debt he owed to that tract.

The sermon put the question, *Wheat* or *Chaff?*

I was miserable, I wriggled like a worm; I cursed inwardly this M. Ryle, this unknown disturber of my peace, and this good M. Jaquet, who not knowing how to preach (so I reasoned) borrowed the sermons of somebody or other! When the reading was ended, and the question had been put for the last time, it seemed to me that a vast silence fell and the whole world waited for an answer. It was an awful moment. And this moment, a veritable hell, seemed to last for ever. At last a hymn came to the rescue of my misery. "Good," I said to myself, "that's over at last."

But it was not over. The thunders of Sinai rolled over Coillard as they had rolled over Bunyan. He had no peace. Of course he knew the theory. But now the issue was not one to be settled on the plane of theory. The archers had wounded him sore and he needed healing. In such a condition he determined to see M. Jaquet.

Ah! How often I paced the corridor into which his study opened! How often did I raise my hand to knock at the door!

John Bunyan had known this experience—

"*So he* [*Mr Fearing*] *came up to the gate, you know what I mean, that stands at the head of this way, and there also he stood a good while before he would adventure to knock. . . . There the poor man would stand shaking and shrinking; I daresay it would have pitied one's heart to have seen him.*"

Towards the end of August I was before this door, which drew me, the door which I dreaded; had I really knocked? I do not know but I had already briskly turned on my heels, when the door opened and the worthy principal called me. No way of retreat any longer! Alone with him I burst into tears and by words broken with sobs I let him catch a glimpse of my unhappy condition.

But the good man's words and prayers did not bring relief. The words passed unremembered, though Coillard was touched by his tenderness. It was afterwards that the light broke upon him. Some gain had come to him with the unveiling of his soul to M. Jaquet; that was a stage; peace came with the practical acceptance of a commonplace which he must have heard thousands of times.

"Believe" then means to *accept* and accept unreservedly. "O my God," I cried in the depth of my heart, "I believe." A peace, a joy unknown before, flooded my heart; I could have sung aloud with joy.[1]

"Coillard's a Momier! Down with the Momiers!" was the jesting cry of some of his companions. It was a favourite taunt for the enthusiasts in that

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambesi*, p. 20.

Revival. "Coillard's a Methodist!" would have been the nearest equivalent in the days of the Evangelical Revival in England, when one clergyman fond of reading his Bible used to hide the practice lest he should be called a "Methodist." What the present equivalent is, it would not be easy to find; perhaps there is none. But Coillard cared little for the jest and the taunt. He found himself a freeman of the Christian community among the hills; it was an intense and joyful experience. They had simple tastes; they sang new songs of the dawn which had come upon them. These they copied out in manuscript, and passed from one to another. Coillard had come back to the familiar scenes of his childhood; but he was in the action now, a spectator no longer.

The call to missionary service was not long in coming. That might be expected from the nature of the plot of his life. Nothing had ever seemed to him comparable to the career of a missionary. Once when the appeal was made, he had thought it presumption to accept it. Now, so far as he was concerned, he had no alternative. The thought of his mother was the chief hindrance. There was a clash of loyalties; the voice of his mother seemed to call him one way, and the voice of God another. But, when at first his mother withheld her consent, he set before himself two months as a time limit; during that time he would give himself to prayer and urge her no longer; if, at the end of October, she still withheld her consent, he would regard this as a mark of Divine guidance. Her consent came on October 31st, just in time. "I had hoped," she wrote, "that you would be my staff in age. But,

after all, it is not for myself I trained you." In the fulness of his joy Coillard knelt down and cried, "Here am I, my Saviour; do with me as it shall seem good to Thee." His missionary vocation was sealed. The meaning of the long preparations within his soul began to unfold itself. The romance was clear in its outlines. What means had been used by his Master to call him, we have seen; it would not appear that He is limited to one programme, but wherever there are single-minded lovers of His kingdom He will use the approaches they offer to Him—poor, but the best they know. It is not the machinery but the purity of heart in the men who ply it that matters. Death-bed farewells, the poignant emotions kindled at a funeral, the reading of a tract, answers to prayer at the eleventh hour, strange as it may appear, have proved ways into a trembling soul.

In Coillard's life it is always the unexpected that happens. The stage is prepared for one set of events, and another takes place. You are never sure, so he believed, when you are dealing with God, what is going to happen next. A life in a quiet pastorate in rural France with a call perhaps in later life to a city church—a career full indeed of its own romantic adventures for the heart which has learned to look with Christ upon the scene: a daily attempt to win and comfort a few souls, a desperate struggle for someone between the two camps; a visit to a conference of the faithful where the truths of the Holy Life would be freshly unfolded; a peaceful evening; a death with its testimony eagerly heard and remembered; a column or two in the religious journals; a tablet recording

the faithful minister, and a grateful memory in a few hearts! Such might have been the forecast for the tender, sensitive, shrinking, little Coillard. But the man with the heart of the pastor was to become a fearless traveller with hairbreadth escapes enough to satisfy the most romantic. The shrinking, introspective mystic was to play the part of the prophet—Nathan or Elijah—to wild chieftains; and instead of resting at last in his dear land of France he was to rest beneath the colours of another nation in the heart of Africa.

He was made for peaceful scenes; he received a sword. He was made for a quiet continuous service; he was driven from one place to another; and few men have known, as this lover of home knew, the lot of the wanderer. A rough use for so delicate an instrument! But he was under orders; and "the politeness of a soldier lies in obedience"; and this must be said when the disposal of his life is considered—there are not too many available with a surrender so complete as this man offered to his Lord.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERPRETER'S HOUSE

Through Strasburg and Paris to Africa

His love will seek in thee till death
A Bethlehem and Nazareth;
He climbs the hills of Galilee
And marches to the Cross in thee;
Thou art the Garden where He lies,
In thee, the third day, He will rise;
Rejoice, great soul, when morn shall break
And leave thee sleeping, He will wake.

BETWEEN Glay and Africa there were several stages. The story of that time is the story of a student's life, and the story of a diligent student is always hard to tell; the best students provide the least material for history. What history there is, comes in the vacations. Coillard during this period in his preparations had many risings and fallings in his inner life. He could not share the complacency of some of his friends, who spoke of their complete victory over sin. There was growth indeed, but growth through struggle and anguish.

There were two Societies to which Coillard might have offered himself—the Basle Society of Switzerland, and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Coillard was French, not only in birth but in heart, and all the more eager in his love, because he belonged to the religious minority. The call from Paris for this and other reasons prevailed.

The Paris Society had been formed during the first glow of a revived spiritual life within the Protestants of France. The year 1822, when it was born, saw the first sod cut for a railway, and the first practical use of electricity. By the time Coillard enlisted in its service the first generation of pioneers had already done their statesmanlike work in Basutoland; and the Society had established an honourable record.

The letter which the youthful candidate sent to the Committee gives his spiritual history in the precise language of his school; it has a quaint sound to our ears; the serious young man writes as if he were very mature and old. But it is only the superficial who can miss the ring of faith and devotion when Coillard offers to his Lord through the Society his fatherland, his home, his life. He was examined by certain pastors of the Montbéliard district, and they reported that of the sincerity of his religious life there was no doubt; he spoke easily and correctly, and was most thoughtful. His secular knowledge, however, was not very great, and of his capacity to acquire a language they had no evidence, since as yet he only knew his mother-tongue. There were certain questions of procedure still to be settled, but the Committee were satisfied with the report, and Coillard was received as a candidate for the mission field.

At Magny, first of all, in the Jura country, he studied for his calling. There among a godly people he spent six months, reading Latin and the Greek New Testament seriously and a little Hebrew; and in his leisure time he shared the life of the devout in that valley. They were bold and urgent in their study of the Holy Scriptures and

in their appeals to the unconverted. Robert Louis Stevenson tells how in the Cevennes he met with a humble peasant who said to him, "Connaissez-vous le Seigneur?" (Do you know the Lord?) and how he replied that he did know Him. In another district and in another time that peasant might have been Coillard himself.

From Magny in October 1853 he migrated to the Seminary at Batignolles in Paris, where, with fourteen other students, he came under the guidance of M. Boissonas. The school was still in its early days. It was a happy and well-ordered society under a discipline of love and not of law; and yet it was a real discipline. At first the peasant was not at home; he felt awkward in the polished society of Paris. City life tried him; there are signs in his journal, which he began at this time, that he was sometimes sick in body as well as in spirit.

This journal belongs in its remorseless self-scrutiny to the same type of religious literature as the journals of Brainerd and *Grace Abounding*. Above this journal he drew a Cross with the inscription on the cross-beam, *Dieu est Amour* (God is Love). It is more than likely that, like all his fellows, he entered in his diary more of the falls than of his risings and victories. It is always hard to know what are the due proportions in the record of a *Journal Intime*. Events and experiences are recorded while they are still unfinished, and their meaning is not plain.

François had certainly many delightful times in Paris. Famous preachers were then to be heard there, among them M. Adolphe Monod. There

were other great preachers in Paris, but to Coillard none to be compared to him. Monod revealed what preaching could do. The man was weighed down by the burden of his mission; his face was lit with an unearthly light. While he preached, his hearers held their breath. "Hearing him," wrote Coillard, "one could not help thinking of the testimony given to our Saviour by the spies of His enemies: 'Never man spake like this man.'" It was wise to go early to church when Monod was preaching; but the young man from the countryside with the hero-worship of youth strong within him could spend the time of waiting in studying M. Guizot, the great historian and statesman, the most famous of French Protestants.

In Paris Coillard enjoyed all the pleasures permitted to "serious" people: grave talk, much singing and prayer, and probably more happy laughter than the serious disclosed in their diaries. Hospitable salons of the devout were open to him. In one of these homes he met again with a thrill of delight Mlle. Bost. It was the last time; six years afterwards she died. In the same home he met two sisters, daughters of a Scottish minister, Kate and Joanna Mackintosh, and later the third, Christina, who was afterwards to become his wife. Without any question there were pleasant friends to be known among the Protestants of Paris. It was during this period of his life also that he came to know the Methodists in Paris, and often he shared in their class-meetings. For M. Hocart, their minister, he had the greatest admiration. But the religion of the city showed a lack of enthusiasm; Christians were afraid of being banal.

There were refinements which Coillard did not welcome; they took the pith out of Christianity:

> Dear Saviour, Thou hast said that the gate and the way which lead to life are narrow, and thy children are toiling so to enlarge it that soon this gate will be as large as that which leads to hell. "Why do you always play the Jeremiah?" Ah! Would to God I could play the Jeremiah as Jeremiah himself did!

He knew what an English poet, afterwards dear to him, had known:

> *I hear and see, all the long day*
> *The noise and pomp of the broad way,*
> *I note their coarse and proud approaches*
> *Their silks, perfumes, and glittering coaches;*
> *But in the narrow way to Thee*
> *I observe only poverty,*
> *And despised throngs. . . .*

Coillard's first ambition was to spend his missionary life in Patagonia or New Zealand. His quick imagination was busy conjuring up the perils of his calling. He pictured himself in front of a crocodile, or pursued by a lion, or a panther. How impossible to be a missionary if this depended upon himself!

It is probable that the aged lady who warned him against pride was speaking to his real condition; she told him that pride might take the form of self-humiliation—the pride that continually tells a man that he is below his true stature. Against the pride which is expressed in exalting self above its true proportion he was proof; but pride in the other disguise was not yet vanquished.

In later years Coillard showed a full measure of wit, and travellers tell how pleasant and even merry his talk would be. But in youth the jests of his fellow-students at first only saddened him. He

was, as Bunyan put it, being tuned from the bass; he had certainly some of the intolerance of youth, which may be but a wild protest against the compromises and makeshifts of an earthbound life. It is the cry for perfection in an imperfect world.

At the end of twelve months Coillard had a serious attack of typhoid from which he nearly died; he waited for death, but it did not come. He resigned himself to life. The hours of illness and convalescence proved a time of sweetness and calm. Upon his recovery he entered upon a brief college career at Strasburg. It was the time of the Crimean War, when the French were fighting with the English to support the Turks against Russia. There was some danger lest Coillard's name should be drawn in the conscription; that would mean seven years of military service, and probably the abandonment of a missionary career. The directors of the Paris Society therefore resolved to enrol Coillard as a regular student in the faculty of theology at Strasburg, and by this means they secured his exemption from the army.

At Strasburg he studied on the classical side; at this time he dreaded philosophy as a peril to faith, though afterwards he came to see, and to advise others, that the wider the range of study a missionary could cover the better he would be fitted for his task. Coillard himself had the heart of a poet though he had not the mastery of the form; just as he had the heart of a musician but no great technical skill. His chief interest outside his theological studies lay in the humanities, and at Strasburg he made headway in his studies. But he was uncomfortable in the University; he was

lonely, and overpowered and bewildered by the eager intellectual life of the place. There are clear evidences of the impact of intellectual doubt upon his faith.

May 10, 1855. Sometimes I believe, at other times I doubt, and often I deny. My Christianity has become very dim, I can no longer see clearly. I believe that up to the present I have been too credulous, and now I see that the whole edifice of my faith—the edifice in its entirety—must be begun afresh, tested and rebuilt.

But on the following day he enters in the same diary that he wished "to spend his vacation in Asnières and to preach the Gospel there." On the 23rd he records that he had read Moffat's *Twenty-three Years' Sojourn in South Africa.* Of this book by one of the earliest of his heroes he wrote, "Me voici, ô Dieu, fais de moi ce qu'il te semblera bon!" (Here am I, O God, make of me what shall seem good to Thee.) At other times he tells in penitent and almost despairing words of his struggle with evil thoughts:

In place of fighting the Devil, I invite him, I caress him. . . . I am in despair. Great God! I am lost.

He had a very scrupulous conscience; he would even reproach himself for gluttony. For the year at Strasburg he was allowed eight hundred francs (£32) to cover everything—board, lodging, tutorial fees and personal expenses. The youth whose shoes were in holes, and who was provided only with an old suit from his Glay days, and with no gloves—would attack himself fiercely for yielding to luxury!

In his choice of studies he had to decide at one point between a life of devotion to science and his purpose to become a missionary. A professor of Natural History, who coached him, encouraged him to believe that he might give distinguished service to science, and at the same time to the Gospel of Christ. The career of a learned pastor, with scientific studies for his leisure, had its attractions for him; but he turned from it. In after years he regretted that he had not been able to carry such studies further and that they had been broken and incomplete.

Owing to the short time available he did not pass the examination for the degree. This was not remarkable, but it was a blow at the time to his sensitive and naturally proud heart. But he had prayed that whatever happened, it might be for the glory of God; and he accepted the answer. Success might have been, so he thought, the ruin of his spiritual life. It might have fostered his pride, and led him from the main path of his destiny.

After Strasburg there followed another short interval. In 1856 he was released from his studies for a while to take charge under the direction of the minister at Bourges of the church at Asnières; and much to the delight of his mother he ministered in the church of his childhood. In a room not far from his mother's old cottage he studied and gathered round him his old friends for Bible reading and, of course, for singing. It was to the strain of song that the church began once more to awaken to a new life. The good days of Ami Bost came back again.

During his short ministry in the village community,

he set himself not only to win with equal earnestness all his people, but made it also his set purpose, which he pursued like a hunter, to win one man, J. B. It was the practice of his school of faith to make some such individual soul a peculiar care, a target, and almost a test-case. It was a single combat; and in his diary he records the progress of the battle. For Coillard the struggle was a sign of interest in individual souls; an interest which is the secret of all evangelism, whether at Asnières, or in Central Africa. To J. B. he gave the same unwearied care as he gave in after years to the Chief Molapo or to Lewanika, Chief of the Barotse. His prayers for J. B. are strangely intense:

> Thou hast many means, my Father; it is Thy work, Thy glory; if Thou dost not hearken to me, anguish besets me; I shall die. And then, Thou knowest well that I am a poor child, who knows not how to do Thy work. What must I say and how must I say to this unhappy man, Thine enemy? Show me if I ought or ought not to seek him out. I know not how to do Thy will, my Father, teach me; my deepest anguish would be to see all my efforts and longings have for their result the loss of the soul of J. B.

To the end of his time in France and afterwards he kept to his pursuit. Some letters were exchanged, and then the issue must be left, for the end of the long struggle is known only to God. It is characteristic of Coillard's life that, so far as he knew, he did not win J. B.; he did not win Molapo, who died, as he had lived, an apostate; he did not win Lewanika, for whose soul he struggled till death. As he understood those battles he lost; but the last word is not yet spoken.

During the years 1856-7 Coillard finished his studies in Paris under the inspiring guidance of M. Casalis in the House of Missions, 31 rue Franklin. Casalis was home from Basutoland and around him were gathered a group of students united in their one passion to make known the Gospel to the heathen. There is a photograph of these students surrounding M. Casalis; among them Eugène Casalis the younger, Rau, Ellenberger, and chiefly Mabille with his hand upon Coillard's shoulder. They look older than their years; they are very serious; they wear the frock-coat of the period (such as was known in Scotland as "Sabbath blacks"), high collars, big ties, vast shirt-fronts. Coillard is seated on the left of the Principal. He has his hair somewhat long, and side whiskers; his face is long and handsome, the face of a dreamer and a zealot, who has passed through many spiritual storms and has many still to face. But no one would identify in the picture the man who was to become the intrepid explorer, who followed upon the trail of Livingstone, the peer of the noblest adventurers in Africa. Coillard would have declared this to be an impossible destiny for himself. But those grave and aged-looking youths with their prim and austere faces and their Sunday "blacks" had something else which no picture can show.

In that Missionary College the friendship of Adolphe Mabille and Coillard began. Each was to become the helper and the fulfiller of his friend's life; and their names were to stand side by side in the annals of the Basuto mission. "He was," said Coillard, "the friend of my heart, we were David and Jonathan." The students of the College

were knit together in their enthusiasm. They had a leader, who brought with him the glory of his African career; and every true Frenchman responds to the appeal of glory. M. Casalis took them with him in thought to Africa; he was a great enthusiast, and loved his Basuto. He would even praise certain qualities in them, which he had had to rebuke in Africa. "He would say to future missionaries that they must love the pagans, and seek among them those fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and friends whom Jesus promised to His servants in exchange for those whom they must leave for His Name's sake." His love for the Africans was not a love for them simply as souls, but as human beings; it was not a theological love but a warm personal love. Nor was it reserved for the Christians; he loved the pagans in their paganism. Such love for the Africans was caught by his pupils. Of these Mabille was the born statesman and organizer; "le père sérieux," they nicknamed him, but Coillard declared afterwards that this was unjust. Coillard himself to the others appeared very serious, and they even suspected him at times of pose. Another recalls that he was known because of the beauty of his speech as "Chrysostom." At times he could be gay, but he complains himself that these times were too few; his youth had not the grace of hilarity.

Of their lighter moments the students never forgot the adventure of the Bois de Boulogne. M. Casalis had on many occasions to refer to his journeys on horesback—Why should they not begin their lessons in horsemanship at once? They asked M. Casalis to go with them; he smiled and

declined. They mounted their horses, seven in all, and for two francs each they could have them for an hour. How they mounted they never knew; but after a long time they were all in the saddle. Then they had to make the beasts move, no easy task, but the stable-boy was charitable, and bestriding a horse himself, with a whip he drove them out into the street. The Parisian street urchins could be depended upon to rise to the occasion when they saw the seven riders in Indian file being driven by the cracking of the stable-boy's whip whither they could not tell. Hobbling along went the hacks. Everywhere the riders met with idlers, who joined in the noisy chorus of the gamins, and the ride went to the song, taken up all along their way:

Les quarante sous du bois de Boulogne!
Les quarante sous du bois de Boulogne!

Would they like another hour? asked the boy. "No, thank you, this is sufficient." Thereupon the hacks turning homeward began to trot. When the riders arrived in the midst of shouts and cheers with their trousers turned up to their knees, they paid their bill and, laughing with the rest, turned towards the college. M. Casalis had foreseen that there would be a Don Quixote turn to this expedition, and he was not anxious to take part in it!

Coillard's studies were hard; the foundations had not been securely laid. But in this period of his life he was happy in the unstinted friendships of youth and in the vision of a divinely-appointed service before him. There were hours of ecstasy, and depths of gloom. Every experience was

heightened in such a sensitive nature; but through everything preparations were being made well and truly, when another interruption came. "Avec Dieu, on n'est jamais sûr de rien." (With God you are never sure of anything.)

One morning M. Casalis brought to François the suggestion that he should go out at once to South Africa with M. Daumas. Coillard accepted the call. There was disappointment in his heart at the shortening of the time of training, but no rebellion. For his mother he had much sorrow. To an assembly bidding him farewell he said, "Oh, pray for my mother!" For himself he was a soldier under orders.

The time of bidding farewells is painful in every age; but in 1857 the farewell was for a prolonged period. It was a rare thing for a youth to go to the field; there was little likelihood of his return till after many years; and farewells were made on the assumption that they were for ever. That was indeed the nature of the leave-taking between Coillard and his mother—"Adieu, my child, I shall not see you again," she cried. It was at Foëcy, a memorable landmark in his life, that the train carried him away.

I saw her still far away; my niece was supporting her and helping her to walk . . . I felt myself shaken to the depths of my soul: No, I said to myself, no, my dear mother, I would never have left you, if it were not God Himself who was calling me! I collected myself for a moment, opened my Bible and read this single verse: "Praise the Lord, O my soul!"

Mother Kindness went back to her village, and never saw the face of her boy again. The one who

went forth into a new life paid indeed his part of the price; but with her longing held back and yet breaking out of her lips—"If only he had stayed in France . . . but . . ."—the patient, toiling mother had her share to pay, and she paid it in full.

CHAPTER IV

LONECRAFT

Jesus saith :

> Wheresoever there be two, they are not without God.
> And where there is one alone, I say, I am with him.
> Lift up the stone and there thou shalt find me,
> Cleave the wood and there am I.
>
> *The Sayings of Jesus from Oxyrhynchus.*

At last after every conceivable farewell meeting and interview was over, Coillard left his native land and, after a short stay in London, sailed for Africa in the *Trafalgar* on September 2nd, 1857. It was a ship which rolled badly and "abounded in cockroaches" ("coquerodges" as M. Coillard spells them). "His bed had millions of insects of all sizes," the advance guard of the host which every traveller in the tropics must meet. He used the voyage to study English; and to prepare himself in thought and in prayer for the life before him. As he sailed past the coasts of France, he apostrophized his country; but as the voyage proceeded, he began to apostrophize the life of the desert, and the privations which awaited him —"You await me. I desire you!" Such entries would not be found in the diaries of most British missionaries. The British soldier went into battle shouting at times, "This way for the early doors!" the French *poilu* crying, "Death or Glory!" but

it is not open to the more stolid nation to claim superiority for its own peculiar affectations, and those who shouted "Death or Glory!" did win the Marne and hold Verdun. If Coillard defied the perils of Africa during his voyage, when the hour came he defied them in reality.

The *Trafalgar* touched Cape Town on November 6th, but it was not till January 27th, 1858, that Coillard left the Cape. In order to explain the delay it will be necessary to recall the character of the African scene in 1857.

After the close of the Napoleonic Wars, a bargain was made between England and the Netherlands by virtue of which, for six million pounds, England acquired the Cape. It was a trifling detail at the time, but the transaction gave its character to the destiny of Africa. The Boer farmers were there—Old Testament patriarchs with a strong resemblance to the Puritans of the 17th century. They were a mere handful in the presence of the native tribes; and they had to live with loins girt and rifles loaded. They were indeed a chosen people surrounded by the children of Ham. The British settlers, though they too shared much of the Dutch attitude to the natives, were nevertheless of a later age. The centuries clashed. The Boers seeking freedom to fulfil their own destiny began to trek north in 1836; and the story of African political life after that date depends upon the interaction of three forces, the Boer farmers, the British settlers, and the native tribes—the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Bantu. It is with the Basuto, one of the divisions of the Bantu, that we have to do.

The Basuto occupied under their chief Moshesh a country smaller than Belgium. It lay behind the Drakensberg mountains, which rise like an almost perpendicular wall before Basutoland on the south, east, and north-east. It is now surrounded on every hand by British colonies, but in the days when Coillard arrived at the Cape the Transvaal had recently been declared independent (1852) and two years afterwards, at the Convention of Bloemfontein, British sovereignty had been withdrawn from the Orange Free State. This lay to the north and west of "the Switzerland of South Africa" as the home of the Basuto has been aptly called.

There in this enclosed land of steep mountains with luxuriant valleys within their embrace, with swift rivers over which there were no bridges, surrounded by stern and watchful farmers, Moshesh Chief of the Basuto reigned. His people had been gathered together by him in the early days of the century out of several turbulent and restless tribes. By his consummate ability they had been enabled to build up a position of supremacy among the native tribes north of the Cape. In 1842 the Cape Government had granted them a treaty with the British Government.

It was in the mind of Sir George Napier to interpose between the Boers and the Cape a group of buffer states, of which the kingdom of the Basuto was to be the keystone. Moshesh was declared sovereign of the territories north of the Orange River;[1] this the Boers entirely disregarded, and there were endless quarrels, with which this story has nothing

[1] Mackintosh, chapter iii.

to do. It is enough to say that Moshesh believed that the British Government had betrayed him by encouraging his vassal-tribes to count themselves independent of his rule. He had to yield—"What can a dog do that has a thong round his neck?"—but there was ill-feeling, which showed itself in intrigues and in much freebooting.

To protect the neighbouring tribes from the attacks of the Basuto, Sir Harry Smith sent a fighting force which was wiped out at the Mountain of Viervoets in 1851; a further expedition was sent in 1852 under General Cathcart which also had to retreat, but retreated in so masterly a way that Moshesh, seeing that the game was up, wrote a letter which by itself would be enough to show his statesmanship: "This day you have fought against my people and taken much cattle. As the object for which you have come is to have a compensation for Boers, I beg you to be satisfied with what you have taken. I entreat peace with you—you have chastised—let it be enough, I pray you. I will try all I can to keep my people in order for the future."[1] The treaty was granted; but in 1854, when the British declared the Orange Free State independent, Moshesh was left "like a man forgotten." At his doors were the Free State farmers keenly realizing that they were few and the Basuto many. There were constant raids which led to reprisals, and over Basutoland reigned a sullen chief of remarkable ability harbouring resentment against the Boers and British, though always in his heart desirous of peaceful relations with the British power. In the midst of his land

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

there were the devoted and gifted members of the French Mission, seeking to preach the Gospel. If only they had had a sufficient start ahead of the other influences from white settlers!

The tragedy of South Africa is manifest in the story: the whites suspicious of the native tribes, and ready through misunderstanding or sometimes through deliberate intrigue to take advantage of their backwardness, willing when other arguments failed to make the powder speak! On the other hand, the natives "ignorant and brutal, sometimes violent, often given to cattle-lifting, thinking themselves deceived and despoiled, but knowing not to whom to appeal, taking back their word as easily as they gave it; seeking to exploit their exploiters, and, finally, dreaming under their hard and thick skulls and in their rancorous hearts of driving into the sea those men with the pale faces who in an evil hour set out to establish themselves by their side."[1]

The story of Naboth and his vineyard comes back to all readers of the story; and yet the parts are not really the same. If Naboth's vineyard had been held by men who took a delight in raiding the lands of Ahab and lifting his cattle, the parallel might be closer; and a little more sympathy might be spared for Ahab.

The future of Moshesh and his people could indeed be almost foretold from a study of the map. Around him surged the tides of white settlers. His land in the heart of the Drakensberg mountains was exposed to the ambition and land-hunger of the newcomers. There were sure to be problems, and

[1] H. Dieterlen, *Vie de Adolphe Mabille, Missionnaire au Lessouto.*

almost certainly quarrels. The whites had their needs; the natives their traditions hallowed by immemorial usage. It is always easy to rewrite history, and to speculate upon what might have happened if something else had not happened. But the thing which did happen was a clash of the two traditions and interests, and on both sides there raged a storm of resentment. Instead of a common agreement in which the chief and his white neighbours might have united, there was no settled policy for Moshesh to meet. He was bandied to and fro; he was tricked, as he himself imagined, by the whites, and he never forgave the wrong.

Such political facts are not without their bearing upon the history of the French Mission. Had Moshesh—one of the ablest chiefs in African history—thrown in his influence with the Christian people, the story of Christianity in South Africa would have been different. He was held back not by questions of doctrine, but largely by his resentment at the treatment he had received. The dealings of the other whites with him were remembered when the missionaries pressed on him the Gospel. It is impossible to ignore the political scene in the study of missions in Africa.

When Coillard arrived in Basutoland after peace had been signed with the Free Staters (1858) Moshesh was keeping his court in his mountain-fastness at Thaba-Bossiou. He was a pagan still, and remained so almost to the end, but he was not hostile to the Faith, and in other and happier conditions he might have been a tower of strength to the Mission. The ruined mission stations showed the trail of the

Boer invaders. Never did a missionary arrive upon the scene of his labours in circumstances more discouraging:

> I cannot hinder myself from thinking seriously [Coillard wrote] . . . why has God called me into this Africa, and exacted of me that I should sacrifice my studies? Was it only that I should be a witness of the destruction of these tribes among which I came full of joy and enthusiasm to offer to God the sacrifice of my life? [1]

But this mood passed, and after staying at Bethulie and Hermon and plunging there into the study of Sesuto he recovered his courage.

He did not lack examples of courage. As soon as peace was signed between the Boers and the Basuto the French missionaries met in conference. While the ruins of Beersheba were still smoking, they determined to form two new stations. To one of these—Leribé—Coillard was appointed. The older missionaries felt it their duty to preach patience to their young colleague. But he felt that in Africa it was easily forgotten that "time is short." In Africa months were like days in Europe. It is said in Africa that if you have patience when you come, you lose it: if you are without it, you learn it. With joy and courage and confidence, Coillard received the invitation of his brethren and made ready for Leribé, which was to be for nearly twenty years his home.

At the court of Moshesh, which he visited after the conference, he met for the first time with Molapo, the son of the Chief. Since this man is to play so

[1] E. Favre, *François Coillard, Enfance et Jeunesse*, 1834-1861, p. 285. (The first volume in a series of three, forming together a complete life of Coillard.)

important a part in Coillard's life, it may be well to describe him.

He was about forty years of age with a face showing much of the ability and the cunning of his race. It is important to remember his age. At forty an African is older than a European of the same age; his life has taken its character; it is hard to change. Chief Molapo's clothing left mainly the impression of ochre and grease; and his body also was stained with ochre. A round black hat completed the picture. He appeared at first a little confused, and Coillard did not receive any favourable impression from his first interview. Molapo had been trained in the Christian faith; he had been baptized and received into the Christian church; and he had turned back to paganism. There were many chiefs who came into Coillard's life, but this man was to be for years his neighbour, under whose rule he would live; and he was forty years of age and an apostate, the hardest of all souls to move.

In February 1859 Coillard wrote from his new home at Leribé, about forty-four miles north of the nearest mission station. The isolation provided a severe discipline for a pioneer, but he had come to look upon his life as an ordered process, in which each moment could only be understood in the light of what was to follow. The end would explain in due time the mystery of the road. It was a searching test for a young missionary to be put down alone with instructions to begin a new work; but he did not fail.

Leribé lies almost direct east of Bloemfontein, and in the extreme north of the territory of the

Basuto. The name which the station bore was the name of a mountain: "A huge, tall mountain which changes in appearance as you approach it, presenting from afar one of its highest peaks, tracing in the sky as you draw nearer a long, broken line; crushing you, as it were, by its crown of enormous, perpendicular rocks which the hand of time has more than once indented; opening its breast to serve as a retreat to gay and numerous flocks of goats, which seem to lend something of their abundant life to the rocks and bushes among which they gamble; this mountain of imposing appearance and difficult approach, the natives call Leribé."

South African villages are much alike; the huts are round and are arranged in a circular form. Families are grouped together as among all primitive people. In the centre of the village are the huts reserved for the chief and his household. Near-by is the enclosure, protected by a stockade, within which the tribal assembly, the *khotla*, holds its *pitso*, or session for the transaction of all communal business. In Leribé, as in all African villages before the whites come, the individual life counted for little; the tribe was everything, and the chief, as the visible head of the tribe, received the homage of his people. In such circumstances there is no divided loyalty; no conflict between Church and State; religion, and loyalty to the tribe, are inseparable, and both find their concrete expression in a reverent bearing and submission to the chief, who is the inheritor of the tribe's past traditions the guardian of its unwritten laws, and the pledge of its future.

Leribé may be pictured as a typical African

village, with its community-life grouped around Molapo, its chief. Those who try to see it against the background of nature must think of the grey rocks and the towering mountain heights, and the river with its seasons of torrents, over which there was no bridge; a scene not without an austere beauty of its own, and with wealth of its own, waiting for diligent and patient toilers. It is a more fruitful land to-day than it was when Coillard arrived. It has had peace now for many years; then it was always overshadowed by wars, and rumours of wars.

Several missionaries came with Moshesh himself to install Coillard in the new mission station. Then he was left alone. "Few young missionaries," wrote Mme. Mabille, "have had a lonelier life or one of more entire self-sacrifice than his during the three years he passed there alone, before Mme. Coillard came out to him — surrounded by an entirely heathen population, hearing nothing from morning till night, and often all night through, but the wild shouts, the din of their heathen dances, their drunken brawls. His food at that time consisted of native bread with thick milk and pumpkin. I remember him spending days knee-deep in water, cutting the reeds with which to cover his first little cottage. At that time there was not a single Christian in the whole district with whom to hold Christian fellowship."

The missionary, and especially the pioneer missionary among a primitive people, must be by nature or become by grace a jack-of-all-trades. If he needs a house he must build one; he must be ready to spend days, which he would gladly

give to study, in the fields or on horseback; but he has for his hardest task to find a place for himself in the heart of a people whose life is marvellously ordered by custom and tradition: he must fit into a tribal order, to which he has come from without.

Coillard's new flock called him *Moruti* (teacher), but at first they made fun of him because he had "neither beard nor wife." The first of these charges he soon removed; the second he had to endure for nearly three years. His household difficulties he described in letters to his mother, to whom he wrote of Maria, the old woman who came to help him, and who established herself in the end as a tyrant. "I am old," she said, "you whose heart loves us do take pity on me. I will serve you with love and for the love of God, and of your mother whom M. Arbousset has told us about. I ask nothing from you because you are my father, but if you see old Maria shivering with cold, perhaps you will give her a gown." Poor Coillard did his best to be gentle, respectful, and kind towards her as if she were his mother.

Before his house could be complete, it was necessary for Coillard to visit Berea and other stations. It was on this journey that he first met with Nathanael Makatoko, a nephew of Moshesh, one of the most romantic figures in the story of this African tribe. He attached himself to Coillard from the first—"faithful, vivacious, intelligent, frank, a good workman"—these were the qualities which were seen in him from the beginning.

Makatoko was in the annals of his tribe the hero of a hundred battles, a soldier brave as a lion, and chivalrous in all his dealings with the weak. Stories

of him were told by the camp fires; and among the tribes with whom he had fought there were eager warriors who had accounts to settle. Once when, representing his tribe, he accompanied Coillard to a Conference with Sir Theophilus Shepstone at which the Zulus were present in full force:

"Who are those Basutos?" asked one old warrior.
"My servants," answered M. Coillard.
"Yes? And that man who rides by your side; he has the bearing of a servant truly!" (In Africa, it is quite impossible to mistake a chief's air of dignity.)
"That is my friend," replied M. Coillard.
"And your friend's name?"
"Nathanael."
"Oh, indeed!" The Zulu asked no more questions, but on taking leave he said, "Tell your friend Makatoko that I salute him."
"My friend is called Nathanael."
The old *induna* put his face close to M. Coillard's and whispered laughing, "I knew it was Makatoko from the first moment, but he is all right. You are our guests to-night."[1]

The friendship of Makatoko with the prestige of his early life did something to make up for the behaviour of Molapo, the Chief of the Leribé district. Makatoko helped Coillard with his study of the language and his literary work; and in a thousand ways made it easier for him to adjust himself to the tribal life of the Basuto.

This was the policy of the French missionaries. They recognized in the tribal system something quite familiar to them from the Old Testament; and within the society organized after such a fashion, they sought a hearing for the New Testament.

[1] Mackintosh, p. 128.

They did not come to destroy the ancient method of life; except so far as customs were degraded to the service of lust and other manifest evils, they accepted them. When a levy was ordered to pay for some depredations made by lawless members of the tribe, the missionary would send his horse or ox. This policy demanded of the missionary great sympathy and courtesy. Coillard used to chat with his neighbours wherever he met them; he sat with them in the khotla. There could be no better school for learning the language and for knowing the heart of a people.

Coillard's primitive house of brick was built by July 1859. It is one of his delightful characteristics that he wrote in his letters those very details which friends wish to know: he had the art, for though he could not draw he was in spirit an artist, of giving a picture of the scenes amid which he was cast. His house, he tells us, was twenty-five feet long, ten or twelve wide, and seven or eight high. It was divided into three rooms: the middle one to receive Basuto and Boers, and to serve as a dining-room; the one on the right was a bedroom, but it had along with the middle chamber to do duty also as a chapel. On the left was his own sanctum; there could be found his bed, his study table with the portraits of Mm. Monod, Jaquet, Casalis, Bost; a mantelpiece on which were other portraits of his friends around that of his beloved mother. This was his most sacred ground. There he communed with his Lord, all the nearer to him in his loneliness; there, too, his tender heart called up those friends whose faces surrounded him.

This home he dedicated by inviting his people to partake of an ox which was killed for the occasion. Molapo came with all the village. Coillard first thanked all his friends who had helped him to make the bricks and cut the grass and rear the building, and he did not forget to point the moral by telling the story of Babel. Hymns were sung and prayer offered. Molapo spoke words of welcome to the moruti, "one of our nation"; and even called upon his people to abandon their evil ways and be converted. This was not unlike Molapo, who almost with one breath would curse the Christian Faith and commend it to others.

There was something peculiarly valuable in the instinct for ceremony which the French missionary had. It gave him a ready insight into the ordered life of his people. He, too, loved the ways of courtesy and becoming ceremony. The *beau geste* was as dear to him as it is to all Frenchmen. There would be no danger of his giving offence through a clumsy and thoughtless neglect of form. More than one hopeful negotiation between whites and native tribes has been ruined through the careless manners of the whites, and their failure to understand the tribes, whose manners are always the expression of their religion.

After the feast the guests begged the moruti to make his music weep; he could not refuse, and taking his accordion to their great delight he chanted in Sesuto a translation of the words:

There is a city above,
It is a city of peace,
It is a city which hath been founded
By the Master of all created things.

The little boy who listened to the songs of Zion in the cottage at Asnières had now his wish; he too played the accordion and sang the same songs, but in an alien land, and in a strange tongue.

There are many ways of approach down which all missionaries must move into the pagan heart: upon these we need not linger. It is enough to say that the Frenchman brought all his instinct for style in language into his Sesuto preaching. His fellow-missionaries report that he became the master of a beautiful and telling speech in his adopted country. He preached to his neighbours; mounted on horseback he rode out to stations which he established in outlying districts; he sat in the khotla and took his part. But his chief distinctive contributions to missionary method must be noted. He was never a poet as he understood the ideal of a poet; but he had the soul of one who sings, and to his new people he gave many translations and songs still dear to the Basuto Christians. Not only did he give them hymns but he would prepare for them snatches of song to be sung as they ploughed and reaped. The African loves to improvise as he does his work. Sometimes if he is carrying a traveller he will invent merry descriptions of his personal appearance, not always flattering, and sing the hopes that he has of his next meal at the end of the journey. One such ditty is preserved by Mr Masefield in *Multitude and Solitude*.

Jualapa is near. Yes, Jualapa is near. Not like Marumba
We will eat meat in Jualapa. Much meat. Much meat.
The men of Little Belly will eat meat in Jualapa.

Coillard, knowing this habit, would write little songs of the seasons, which his people learned to sing and still sing to this day.

But the student of methods will be impressed most of all by the fact that Coillard made great use of fables in his teaching.

26th March 1860. I preached upon Luke xiii. 1. I recounted the fable of the Grasshopper, the Ant and the Bee imitated from *La Cigale et la Fourmi.* It seemed to produce some effect, for after worship groups were formed in which they repeated what I had said.

14th October 1860. I have been busy with translation and with the correction of the MS. by M. Dyke upon Joshua. I have composed or imitated three fables, the fourth is unfinished: the Grasshopper, the Ant and the Bee; the Serpent and the Tool; the Noble and his Fool; the Olive Tree and the Reed. I make the verses easily enough: it remains to be seen what the value may be of the voice of my music. I shall submit to M. Jousse a piece which I should like to send to Moshesh: the Noble and his Fool. This subject pleased me, and inspired me to such a degree that I did it with one stroke of the pen before lunch. But beware! Poetry seeks to encroach upon my duties!

The rendering of these fables is reported to be perfect; children learn and play them still; there is no more sure test. Poetry and song were for Coillard two rungs in the ladder by which he drew nearer to God.

The years 1859 and 1860 were a time of apprenticeship; "the hermit of Leribé" was able to lay down the lines of his service; he mastered his material, and though the discipline was severe he learned during these years to love his people and his Leribé. It came therefore as a hardship to leave his station to take charge of Hermon during the absence for

reasons of health of M. and Mme. Dyke. In his customary intense fashion he deplores his departure. It breaks his heart to leave Leribé. Are his tears to be in vain? He is dismayed to see that the majority of his brethren are opposed to his return. (They felt that it would probably be better to recall him from such a difficult post and give up the station.) Did they think he was made of wood, with a heart of stone?

He left Leribé in August 1860. On the 3rd of January 1861 he set out for the Cape to meet Christina Mackintosh, who was sailing in the *John Williams* to Africa, where she was to link her life to his, as it proved for thirty years of perfect fellowship.

Christina and François Coillard found, when they traced back their spiritual ancestry, that they stood in the same line of succession. During the early years of the 19th century the two brothers, Robert and James Haldane, greatly moved Scotland; and in 1816 Robert crossed over to Switzerland, and became one of the means whereby a Church, grown stale, was quickened to new life. The flame spread; the French Protestant Churches enjoyed the same revival; in 1822 that new love found its expression in the formation of the Paris Missionary Society. The atmosphere in which Coillard lived in his early days was the atmosphere of that period, when Scotland through Haldane was repaying a little of the debt which it owed to Geneva in return for all it did for John Knox. Haldane, Ami Bost, Coillard —there are the links of the chain. On the other side, in Scotland, Lachlan Mackintosh, the father of Christina, owed his inspiration to James Haldane,

through whose influence he entered upon the ministry.

It was in Paris that François and Christina first met; Christina had taken a post there as a governess. She had been brought up in Edinburgh, and when she learned to say "I believe," she too was thinking of Africa. It was Robert Moffat whose story had moved her as it had moved François. No one can measure the influence of Moffat upon his own generation; this was due not only to his adventurous and patient service, but to the power which only a few possess, to tell the story. But when the way to Africa was closed Christina went to Paris, and as it proved to Africa by way of Paris. Madame André-Walther, as we have seen, had a hospitable salon in that city, where clergy and students and others were welcome; it was in that home in 1857 that Coillard first met his future wife. She was a charming and radiant being; and in the warmth of her Parisian friendships "her social nature expanded like a flower. . . . Those who knew her in later years with shattered health and nerves, could never realize the brilliance of her youth."[1]

Christina heard François speak at a meeting; she appears to have been at first more interested in the future missionary than in the man. But Coillard knew that "she alone could complete his life." At the same time he was troubled by many scruples. Was he putting his work first, or was he yielding to a natural affection, which might hinder him on his appointed way? He was harassed by many fears and uncertainties. When his departure drew near

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

he confided in M. Casalis, and, wise man! in Madame André. She in her kind and tender way provided an occasion for Christina and François to meet. On the 15th August there were illuminations in honour of the Emperor; after tea and song and an act of worship Madame André asked Coillard and a friend to accompany the two Scots ladies, Christina and her sister, to see the illuminations. They walked through the streets, filled with people and mud.

I scarcely remember the illuminations [Coillard wrote], for other thoughts preoccupied my heart. I said little; she said little, for I did not know English then, and she, just arrived from Scotland, knew little French. We understood each other for all that, and she gave many proofs of her devotion and her affection for missions. We returned.

For missions; for the missionary! But not for François yet, the trembling sensitive heart that needed her! He too, though the thought of her never left him, could see no way of advance; his departure could not be delayed. He thought out his position but reached no definite conclusion. Old hesitations returned; ought a missionary to be married? He could not be sure of the Divine Will for him. He had however not been long in Africa before he wrote through Mme. André for the hand of Christina. But much to his distress he received a refusal. Her family did not approve; her friends thought that in Africa she would be lost to the world in which she had taken her place in Paris.

Christina had had a premonition from the beginning that Coillard was the man of her destiny; but meeting with opposition from all sides she

yielded, it is said for the only time perhaps in her life. Coillard too received much good but conflicting advice; M. Berger was assured that if Coillard was to find the wife whom the Lord had appointed for him he must first forget that he needed a companion. But Mme. Daumas in Africa with a smile told him to write again. He wrote again, but only after two years, during which he endured solitude and much sorrow of heart; and this time she replied that in a few months she would come to share his life.

Christina suffered greatly in the parting in Scotland from her mother and her brothers and sisters. She was setting out for a life which would rob her of much that she prized; she had no taste for domestic life, she loved society, she was intellectual in her tastes. "Africa was the grave of all her ambitions and of all her tastes." She went away from her home and kindred, but without joy. She loved Coillard the missionary, but she knew the man but little.[1] Their training had been as different as it could be. The child of a Scots home in Edinburgh was to unite her life with the Frenchman, none the less a Frenchman because he came from the stock of the Huguenots. Such doubts troubled her during the preparations for the voyage. But she knew that there had come to her the call which cannot be mistaken or denied. She obeyed, but her friends could never bear to think of her anguish as she left them.

She landed at the Cape, but through a postal misunderstanding François had proceeded to Port Elizabeth. Imagine the despair of the sensitive and

[1] E. Favre, Vol. I., p. 339.

romantic soul when he thought of her arrival at Cape Town five hundred miles away! He could not wait for the boat, and determined to go by road.[1] He took his place in a post-cart, rushing night and day and all the time. Down the rough roads, and along narrow ledges he was carried to the Cape. The fear of the grief which his bright beloved might suffer must have made the delay intolerable. But as M. Favre adds, happily their hearts understood each other.

It is pleasant to remember "little" Coillard (for the adjective followed him to Africa) driving madly to the Cape. Sometimes the men of his age have left behind a memory of austerity, and the reader asks, did they ever unbend? Their portraits always seem to show them serious, and a little sombre. Perhaps that is due to the length of exposure necessary. But no doubt they had their jests and their love-makings; and their human affections were not less deep because they were sworn soldiers of God. In token of that human side, on which also God dwelt, we may rejoice in Coillard's drive from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town.

M. Casalis wrote to say that he knew the road well, and all the rugged places Coillard had to pass, and he wondered that all his bones had not been dislocated. Having done his duty as a director of the Mission in condemning the reckless drive, he added that he liked it all the same. "One recognizes in this journey that of a man with French blood in his veins and one who knows by intuition as well as our neighbours across the Channel that faint heart never won fair lady." It was very

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

needless ; quite contrary to all regulations, and yet —he loved him for it.

Christina and François were married on February 26th, 1861, in the Union Church at Cape Town, by the Rev. A. Faure of the Dutch Reformed Church. They entered upon a union that seemed perfectly planned. Each was the complement of the other. The Scots girl with her brilliant gifts and her strong practical sense ; the Frenchman with his sensitive and tender nature, waiting for the companionship of heart and soul which she brought. They were everything to each other ; and till the hour when he laid her to rest, there remains but one story for the two. From the outset they had not loved each other less because they had regarded their lives as belonging always to their Saviour.

It is fair to say that Coillard would never have been able to endure the uncertainties and the long delays of his life, the disappointments and failures, had it not been for the firmness and courage of Christina, who never shrank back from any hazard. She too would have counted it sufficient honour to have her name written beside his in the annals of the Church of Christ in Africa.

CHAPTER V

THEIR ORDERED LIFE

At Leribé, 1861–1866

> And let our ordered lives confess
> The beauty of Thy peace.
>
> WHITTIER.

AFTER a week by the sea the bride and bridegroom returned to the Cape to prepare for their journey. On 19th March they went by sea to Port Elizabeth, where they awaited their baggage; and when all things were ready they set out for Leribé.

Christina had to make her first acquaintance with life in a wagon; but she made up her mind from the beginning that she would have the wagon as home-like as possible. Coillard himself was orderly in his ways; the natives with their aptness in nicknames called him the "father of neatness"; but even he had not a greater passion for neatness than that which possessed Christina. It would have been, she said, a regret to her in eternity if her Lord suddenly summoned her from earth, and she had left her house untidy. Coillard wrote with great pride of the wagon with its pretty curtains, its plants and its rugs. "It is the eighth wonder of the world!" he exclaimed. Indeed the two agreed that good taste is not an *hors-d'œuvre* among tribes in which religion and etiquette are so closely related.

Their wagon as far as they could make it became a home and a sanctuary. Wanderers in the Africa of those days were tempted as they are still to let things go. The Coillards owed much of their endurance, and something of their own peace, to their habits of order and their refusal to surrender the little things as they seem to some, which are not little if they add dignity and grace to human lives.

The praise of Christina is much in Coillard's diaries at this time; she was all that he had most desired, and her love to him was wonderful. One day only in those first weeks of their married life did he wish effaced; that was the day when he lost control of himself in his anger against a negro who had been impertinent to Christina. It was the last time he yielded to anger in this way; and the reader will be more impressed by the bitter penitence of the man for a momentary lapse, easy to understand, and by the fact that the story stands alone, than by the deed itself. The diary of this time records some of the sorrows of one who with remorseless scrutiny goes over his own spiritual life. One day he laments that the grass has grown on the road that leads to God; his knees refuse to bend; his Bible is unopened! These confessions grow fewer as the story proceeds, and his religious life gains in steadfastness and tranquillity, but to the end this man would never lower the standard for himself, nor allow his own heart to deceive him. No man ever begged more earnestly for the lowest place.

On the 9th of July 1861 François and Christina arrived at Leribé, which Coillard now described with triumph as the "Ex-Hermitage." They found the work of the mission in a neglected state, like a garden

after a hailstorm. But there was a warm welcome for Christina "our mother." Molapo was still the same being—a soul in which two tides met. No one among the Basuto knew the Christian truth better than he; he had spent seven years at the mission station of Morija; yet his former knowledge and his rejection of the Truth for himself made him at times a bitter and dangerous foe, at other times a patron. Nathanael Makatoko was in the press of his fight against the pagan customs of his tribe; he was still the foremost diplomatist of his people, and the idol of the warriors, and for these reasons he was only able to win his way into the kingdom of God by a long and bloody struggle. It was years before he was baptized. The hero of a thousand fights found this the hardest and best fight of all. Two converts were baptized not long after Coillard's return: one of them, Nkele, who was given the name of John, was to prove a recruit of much power.

The first five years of their married life François and Christina were to spend in Leribé; they were of necessity years in which many duties material and spiritual crowded upon them. To their lasting sorrow they had no children of their own; but their home was seldom without children whom they had adopted. They started a school—"the nursery-garden of the Church," but in this work they had to meet with the growing hostility of Molapo.

Besides these things Coillard was busy daily with his literary work—translating and writing hymns and songs in collaboration with his friend Mabille. He had his part moreover in translating the Old

Testament. He is said to have been supremely successful in his rendering of *Proverbs*, a book which from its very character makes a peculiar appeal to the Basuto. They too had their proverbs, and they delighted in the proverbial manner. Some indeed of their sayings would have found favour with the Wise Men of Israel: "A horse may stumble though it has four paws"; "the child of the crab moves sideways"; "the live coal begets the cinder"—these and others like them show the homely wisdom which goes readily into proverbs. There was a certain affinity between the Basuto and the wise men of the East.

The daily round is described by Coillard in his own detailed and happy style. At sunrise he rose, and Christina a little later. Prayer with the servants followed before they dispersed to their duties, one to the cows, another to draw water, and another to sweep, or to prepare déjeuner. Till that meal he stayed in the house to read, write, make translations or prepare articles for the journal which Mabille edited. After déjeuner they went the round of the garden, saw the workmen and distributed the work for the day. Then school till midday. Afterwards for a while they returned to the garden, Christina with her sewing and François to his planting and weeding. Dinner at five; then a lesson, and afterwards another visit to the garden. At sunset when the work of the household was done for the day, the bell called to prayer. Tea followed; and three times a week Coillard had a school for the young people in his service and for others who could not come in the day. The other evenings he gave to the preparations for Sunday, or to reading and

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music and chat, or while Christina sewed—she made his clothes as well as her own—he read aloud to her. (She had an ambition, which was afterwards gratified, for a sewing-machine.) At the same time, true to the genius of her race, she had a taste for metaphysics. This gave them one of the family jests without which no properly-conducted home can survive.

> I really think [he wrote to her] we have killed the blue-stocking mouse. She was frisking about this evening in the fresh air, philosophizing, no doubt, about the Properties of Matter, when we pursued and overtook her, the rogue! How fat and sleek she was! She had nibbled plenty out of your books. Poor creature, she was charming but a thirst for knowledge was her ruin.[1]

It is a peaceful picture; but Christina had not found peace without struggle in her new life. She was home-sick at first, and brooded much over old letters, allowing her thoughts to wander back evening after evening; but one day, with the determination which marked her, she put an end to her brooding and burnt her letters. She met her husband at the door, saying, "I have burnt them all. You shall never see me fretting any more. Forget thine own people and thy father's house." It was a characteristic act; she kept her word. Henceforward there was no looking back. "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Outside this idyllic scene there lay the village with its still almost unbroken paganism. Evangelistic journeys had to be made to surrounding villages;

[1] Mackintosh, p. 113.

and nights spent under the stars. Rivers had to be crossed, for there were no bridges then, and more than once life hung on a thread at the ford of some river in torrent. Into the little area of peace there crept many rumours of war, for the Peace signed in 1858 was never very stable. At any moment there might be war.

The village of Molapo in which the station had been built soon proved to be an undesirable environment. One Christmas Day after a feast which Coillard had made for his scholars, Molapo took offence, and fearing lest the school should win over the children to Christianity, withdrew his own children and his subjects followed him. It seemed at the time the ruin of a promising piece of work. It was in part because of this action of Molapo that the missionaries chose a new site a little further away from the home of the chief. The name of their new home was Maoana-Masoana, which is by interpretation the "Little White Caves."

You will have an idea of the station [wrote Coillard [1]] if you imagine a horseshoe formed by the mountain. At one end is a magnificent gorge with a cascade which during the rains falls from cavern to cavern into a ravine: it is there the village of the chief is to be found; at the other end is the village of Pagamoto. The station is in the middle; on one side my people and my German workmen have built pretty little houses at the foot of immense rocks; on the other are our little house with one room, seven feet high, of stone and brick, our tent, our wagon, and, finally, four stakes fixed in the ground which act as steeple. Its aspect is northerly. Below the station flows the river Caledon.

[1] E. Favre, *François Coillard, Missionnaire au Lessouto*, p. 61 (Vol. II. in the series).

It was a place with a stern beauty of its own, but it was at first to them the beauty of wild and desolate places; and it was their aim and delight to make a garden in the wilderness. They took the first steps for the building of their church; but Africa was to prove itself to them a land of delays, where they who hope must not lack patience. The church was not consecrated until 1874.

The visit in 1864 of Dr Duff,[1] the Scots missionary, who had laid the foundations of modern education in India, proved a landmark in the history of Basutoland. He could not find time to visit Leribé even though Christina was Scots; but Coillard was present at the Conference of French missionaries when Duff laid down the lines which the educational work of the French Mission has followed to this day.

Mabille and his friends were filled with a passion to evangelize Africa, and for this end they would summon the Churches of Basutoland to share in the task. With the New Testament in hand Christians might sally forth from their mountain fastnesses not to raid the interior as their fathers had done, but to win it for Christ. Mabille was already dreaming of the tribes on the Zambezi. Dr Duff came to these men of vision with the message that they must have institutions for the training of Basuto evangelists. They said to him, "We have none." "If you have none," he replied, "make some!" Led by his counsel the Conference took up afresh the question of a training school. It was resolved to begin such a school at Morija, but it was difficult

[1] For a record of Dr Duff see *Alexander Duff, Pioneer of Missionary Education*, by W. Paton.

to decide who should be its head. To Mabille and the Conference Coillard seemed to be the man made for this post, which was offered to him.

It must have had many attractions for Coillard; to be to others what M. Jaquet and M. Casalis had been to him was no unworthy ambition. Had he accepted the call, his life would have taken a new and probably final character; he would have lived to teach and inspire relays of evangelists. It was precisely the expected and apparently destined thing which in Coillard's life never came to pass. He decided to remain at his station, where his work was not finished, and put away any dreams he might have had of Morija. His Guide had not given him the word to leave Leribé. For him, as for Burne-Jones, it would have been atheism to do *this* when God said "Do *that*."

They had learned to know the Basuto by this time; they were a people very polite, and given to flattery; but when they were peculiarly polite, they might be expected to ask for something. They proved in many ways a people responsive to affection; but progress was slow, and sometimes it seemed to Coillard as if the curse rested on Africa: "There is no need to stay long nor to go far in Africa to convince oneself that the curse of God rests upon this land of darkness."

Much of Coillard's time was spent in visiting the villages. Sometimes he would find a feast of circumcision in progress with all the drunkenness and licence which attended what Mr Edward Carpenter calls the "jolly pagan sacraments." At other times the people were at leisure to meet at the khotla and listen to his message. He

would make them repeat a hymn line by line; some listened, others laughed. Afterwards he would tell them a parable, and kneeling down ask them to repeat a short prayer. A visit to the sick would be paid before he moved away. As a rule one of his Basuto friends travelled with him. On such journeys he had simply his cloak; and wrapping himself round with it he would sleep with his head on his saddle, or, like Jacob, on a stone.

There was famine in the land, the famine which always follows in the wake of war. Rumours of fresh war became more definite in 1864. But on the evening of a day on which they were expecting the Boers to fall upon them a moving ceremony took place. The foundations of the chapel were laid in the presence of a great crowd. Molapo spoke admirably in praise of education, and set himself strongly against the pagan superstitions, which he turned to ridicule—and this man was himself a promoter of these very customs. Molapo moreover when the collection was taken gave three oxen. Coillard sat at a table recording the names of the givers and even the colour of the goats, oxen, or sheep. It was an interesting collection—more than 180 francs, three chickens, two cocks, two horses, thirteen oxen, eighty-eight goats and sheep; in all the value was more than 2000 francs. It was a very happy assembly and the dread of war was forgotten for a time; and indeed the war was not to break out for a little while longer.

Early in 1865 Coillard crossed the Caledon in flood at no small risk. Molapo on his return begged him not to expose a life so precious. Coillard spoke to him of his own faith:

"As for me the Lord who has called me here from such a distance has given me a work here. As long as this work is not accomplished, I cannot die, and I claim for my own the promises of my Master who says that when I pass through the great waters they shall not overwhelm me. When my work is done, then my Master will call me, and I shall obey with joy; what does it matter moreover if it is the Caledon which is to throw me upon the banks of eternity?"

"But your wife and us your children?" said Molapo in astonishment; "you speak of faith but—but for all that——" "Ah yes," I answered, "the Christian does more than speak of faith, he lives by it, and the God whom I serve calls Himself the God of the widows, and the Father of the fatherless."

It was a serious conversation; both Coillard and the chief had been deeply moved by the death of an Englishman named Hall, who, seeking to cross the Caledon on the day after Coillard's escape, had been carried away by the flood. The one who was left was not the man to let such a tragedy go unheeded. It meant a new consecration to the service of God:

My work is not done, and until it is done, I am immortal.

In Bourges, close by Asnières, Calvin had lived and studied; and the strain of Calvin does not easily die; it was found again in the bold defiance with which Coillard, naturally a timid man, greeted the perils of his way.

It will not be forgotten that in Coillard there was a marked delight in dramatic surprises. He kept all through his life the child's capacity for being pleased by such things. It was like him to prepare a thrilling surprise for Christina, who for the first

two years in the new station, "The White Caves," had had no solid roof over her head; he resolved to build a cottage. Christina was away on a visit to a neighbouring station; there was no time to spare. Bricks were made in spite of the rain; the Basuto entered into the stratagem with characteristic jollity. They never worked so swiftly before, or afterwards; Africa had known no such speed as that. In three weeks the cottage was finished; and Coillard went to bring his wife, and other friends back. When their "mother" arrived, the children of the village went down to the Caledon to welcome her. The river was not dangerous at the time; but unhappily the oxen became recalcitrant and they had to be unyoked. All this took time. Christina, not to disappoint the children, was carried across, and was escorted with tell-tale shouts of joy to the mission, and there she saw the new house. It was a great surprise—she went from one room to another unable to take it in; afterwards she made tea ready for the rest of the merry party.

They were not long to enjoy this new shelter. On June 8th, 1865, Coillard was writing to his mother that they had war in the land. That war was to last for several years, and to threaten the very existence of the mission.

Towards the close of 1864 there had been a war threatened between the Orange Free State and the Basuto; it was a boundary dispute, and the land in question was in the Leribé district. The two peoples had recourse to arbitration; but with characteristic folly on the part of the whites the Basuto were not given sufficient time to obey the

award. The Boers took certain severe measures which afterwards provoked reprisals. The caves above the Caledon were crowded with Basuto refugees. They had not had time to provide themselves with food.

> I saw thousands of women and little children [wrote Coillard] wandering shelterless and foodless in the mountains covered with snow. Oh, what miseries! what evils! John, my companion, reminded me that Jesus had said, "Pray that your flight be not in winter." He was astonished . . . that the Saviour should know what it was to flee in winter.[1]

But the troubles of this little tribe were not at an end. It was not the Boers alone whom they had to face; a certain Lesaoana, a Basuto chieftain and nephew of Moshesh, took to raiding not only the Boers but the British settlers in Natal. He was an entirely lawless person whom neither Moshesh nor Molapo could restrain. On June 5th, 1865, the President of the Free State called upon his burghers to put an end to these raids. The Natal Colony at the same time was driven to action. But Molapo repudiated Lesaoana's conduct and humbly made his submission, and offered to put himself under the protection of the British Government.

Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, a wise and experienced man, arrived thereupon with a force of whites and Zulus upon the borders of Basutoland; and sent a message to Molapo to meet him there. This was one of the occasions in his life when contrary to all his tastes Coillard had to play a part in the political scene.

[1] Mackintosh, p. 120.

Nathanael Makatoko was the Basuto ambassador, and with him Coillard went as a translator; Molapo had expected him to be more than that, and in point of fact his influence must have told for more than a translator's. Nathanael and his suite were welcomed ceremoniously by Shepstone, who knew well how to deal with the African tribes; the Zulus gave them a war-dance, and Shepstone consented for the time being not to move his army.

The embassy were in continual peril from the Boers though Shepstone gave them a passport; the rule in that warfare being to "shoot first—enquire afterwards." Coillard had little hope of returning home again; and many times in their journeys he records how they were fired upon by their enemies. By the hand of Molapo he sent a message to Christina:

> You know how much I love you, and what happy moments we have spent together. Have you never regretted that the moments pass! Well, we have Eternity before us—all Eternity!

The policy not only of Coillard but of other French missionaries was attacked at the time by the British and Dutch colonists; they were accused without reason of becoming the champions of the Basuto, but nothing was ever proved against them except some warm expressions in their letters, of sympathy with their black friends; and who would blame them for that in such a scene of tragic cross-purposes?

The British force did not advance; but the Boers invaded Basutoland, and so long as the missionaries were permitted to stay they had to carry on their

work in the midst of a land at war. Their food ran short; the stations at Leribé and elsewhere were overrun with refugees; it was a time of ceaseless anxiety and danger. Molapo retired into the mountains where he found a natural defence, just as Moshesh took refuge on the impregnable heights of Thaba-Bossiou. Under such conditions the missionaries did not abandon their posts till they were compelled.

The chief event of the year 1865 was the disastrous defeat of the Boers in their attempt on August 14th to capture the heights of Thaba-Bossiou; in that Thermopylæ Nathanael bore a noble part. The amazing discomfiture of the Boers, when they seemed to have won the heights, almost persuaded Moshesh to become a Christian. But in spite of this defeat the forces of Boers and Basuto continued to wage war in the guerilla fashion.

It was during this period that Coillard was sick nearly unto death at Berea. He had run the risk of riding through the night to that station in order to find the mails.

> I tied a handkerchief to the end of a long pole to serve as a white flag, and not anticipating anything but trouble from a meeting with the Boers, I galloped. The darkness and the absence of Boers on the road rendered the precaution useless. But I reached my good friends the Maitins, dead with fatigue.

The next night he was seized with violent internal pains. Every attention was given to him; Dr Eugène Casalis rode over in hot haste, and being much alarmed at his state he wrote for Christina to come at once.

Without waiting to change her dress for a riding habit Christina rode to her beloved. François afterwards wrote an account of this adventurous ride to his mother :

> Think of covering more than sixty miles weeping and with the thought that I was gone ! Night overtook her, the guide lost his way and she was wandering more than three hours among the ravines without advancing. She had the prudence to off-saddle the horse which could do no more, and throwing herself on the ground under a sky heavy with clouds, she poured out her sorrow unrestrainedly before her God, her only Protector. At two o'clock (the afternoon of the next day) she reached Berea, and found that an improvement had set in.

Afterwards, however, pleurisy developed and once more his life was near to the border of death. But all the time Christina was assured that the sickness would not be unto death but for the glory of God. Strength came back slowly, and by January 19th Coillard was on the way home to Leribé. While he was at Mekuatling, where a number of African Christians had assembled for service, the Boers poured into the station and Coillard's servant appeared at the door of the hut with the news. Coillard struggled out through a perfect storm of bullets, and reached the Commandant, whom he implored to stop the fighting :

> War is war and if these people were fighting men, I would say nothing. But you can see they are all unarmed ; they have come to a church festival ; it is like slaughtering sheep.

All the Commandant would promise was to give

a safe conduct to Coillard's three servants; but even this he did not think would be of much use to them. In that warfare they shot at sight any enemy within range. The entreaty seemed, however, to have had some effect on the Boers; and Coillard's party reached Leribé in safety.

> Oh! the sights we saw on the way home, travelling after dark to avoid observation—the villages reduced to ashes; the hills echoing with the howling of Kaffir dogs; the nights filled with the laughter of jackals and hyenas, which told us when we passed the scenes of recent slaughter.[1]

They were not long to remain in Leribé. It is true that Molapo had accepted the protection of the Orange Free State for his own district, which in this way was separated from the rest of Basutoland. This might have been expected to ensure that Leribé would be left with its missionary; but the Orange Free State Government sent orders that Coillard must leave. On 2nd April 1866 the Boers sent to carry away the missionaries with all their belongings by forced marches into the colony of Natal. Their goods were pillaged; and their house occupied by Molapo, who declared that he would take possession of the station for ever. There is reason to believe that Molapo played a sinister part in this transaction. He had made charges against Coillard's character, and had prevented a meeting between the President of the Free State and the missionary. The exiles left Molapo hard and unmoved; and tired and worn-out in mind and body after an exhausting and perilous journey

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

they came into Natal, where they were to rest awhile.

There were all the elements of tragedy in the story. The French missionaries, Coillard among them, had come with the Gospel of goodwill to a people which at first were not unresponsive to the message. They desired nothing but freedom to impart the one supreme gift which they had in their possession. But this primitive tribe had another history proceeding at the same time. It had dealings with the mission, and it had other dealings with the whites, who had crept around them leaving the uplands of Basutoland like an island surrounded by the tide. The two histories met at one point. Lesaoana committed his tribe by his freebooting; and through the action of a Christian power, guarding itself as it thought against such insults, the messengers of the Christian Gospel were sent into exile.

It was an episode not without parallel in other fields. It may have been inevitable that there should be the clash of the two influences, and that the contact of white and black on the political plane should affect their contact on the spiritual plane. It is impossible to isolate the spiritual from its social and political setting; but those who had dreamed of seeing a Christian nation arise out of paganism at the touch of Christ, and toiled for that end, could not be expected to view with philosophic calm their work interrupted for a time and it might be for ever. To surrender to the power of pagan tradition trembling souls for whom they had toiled and prayed; to see their work left unfinished after such patient beginnings; and to watch the tide

of paganism creeping back when it had begun to recede—this was the lot of Coillard and Christina. They were to learn in experience that though they were exiled, there were still faithful souls in Basutoland who would not go back; and in that land there was still the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life.

CHAPTER VI

BETWEEN THE ACTS IN NATAL

1866–1868

"Fight on, my men," says Sir Andrew Barton;
"I am hurt, but I am not slain;
I'll lay me down and bleed awhile
And then I'll rise and fight again."
The Ballad of Sir Andrew Barton.

THE years 1867-8 were spent in Natal. At first both the exiles needed to rest awhile for their health had been shaken during their last days in Basutoland. They were dispirited; and had almost lost hope of returning to Leribé, their home. They were pressed indeed to go to Mauritius, or to settle down in Natal. But not in any of the suggestions was the authentic Voice heard, which they had learned to know. They waited in Ifumi, but not in idleness. Coillard took the place there of an American missionary away on leave, and at once set to work to master the Zulu tongue; in three months he was able to preach to the Zulus in their own language; and during his stay in Natal he preached in English, Zulu and Sesuto. The Sesuto was needed still, because with them there dwelt several of their old flock, who had accompanied them into Natal, and for them there was the daily school.

Ifumi was a pretty place; there was a large house

and a brick church, twice as large as the chapel at Asnières. From the door of their house they could see the ships passing from the Indies and back again; and from the vastness of the sea as they watched it in all its moods they learned afresh how little man is, and how great is God.

It was the Natal of Colenso. In 1866 he was deposed from his see for heresy, but he had appealed successfully against the judgment and was bishop still. Coillard could not be suspected of sympathy with the opinions of this noble heretic; he pronounced them blasphemous. The discourse which he heard in Pietermaritzburg was a confession of faith on the Bishop's part, but Coillard declared it to be a denial of the faith. He describes how Colenso with his utter fearlessness assumed the part of a Paul before the Jews, or a Luther before the Diet of Worms; his works were on the Index, and he himself persecuted and slandered; but he claimed that his day would come.

As a man, Colenso at the same time appeared to Coillard both scholarly and sincere; he was most kind to the exiles, offering them his books and inviting them to his dwelling—it could scarcely be called a palace. Christina indeed declared that she wished his enemies, who professed to know more of the truth, could commend it to others as he did. Coillard was a little taken aback when he was introduced in Colenso's drawing-room to a Zulu who calmly said, "Do you not know me? I am the Zulu who converted Colenso!"[1] It does not enter into the scope of this book to deal with the controversy which broke upon the Bishop; the echoes

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

of which fill several sheets in the British Museum catalogue. But it is a lamentable instance of the irrelevancy introduced by theological debate that the brave and entirely sincere Bishop should be remembered for his arithmetic, while his chivalrous and almost lonely fight for justice to the Zulus should be forgotten. He comes into this story, however, only to show how Coillard, who never changed in any important respect the theology of his youth, was able to do justice to the most unpopular heretic of his day. Unpopular he remained till the end; for some of the colonists who did not greatly resent his handling of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch had the strongest objection to his defence of the Zulus.

The years in Natal were not without their place in the progress of Coillard's life. There Christina and he were taken out of their little circle, and almost compelled to enter into the life, and study the methods of other missions. At the beginning of this sojourn in Natal Coillard was given to an excessive reserve, and was not very sociable. He learned in Natal that ease of manner and charm which impressed all who met him in later years. There too they were able to read in a more definite fashion; and both of them believed most firmly in the virtue of reading. "Mental life one must have," writes Dr Albert Schweitzer, "if one is to keep one's self in moral health in Africa. . . . When one reads a good book on a serious subject one is no longer the creature that has been exhausting itself the whole day in the contest with the unreliability of the natives and the tiresome worry of the insects; one becomes once more a man! Woe to him who

does not in some such way pull himself together and gather new strength; the terrible prose of African life will bring him to ruin!" During their stay in Natal Coillard and his wife, who had always read as they were able, had more leisure and more books and were able to get into training for the days and years of wandering before them. Like all great African travellers they were never without books.

Their health too was renewed. This was true even though Coillard had a serious return of his former inflammation of the bowels. The medicine of that time knew only one cure, croton oil, but that at first could not be procured. Natal in 1867 had only a scanty colony of whites, so that its resources were limited. But by a great mercy Coillard's friends found in the chests of a doctor who had died some years before the very drug they needed. This American doctor had bought the phial at Boston and carried it to Natal in 1835, and there it had remained untouched. How could Coillard, immortal till his work was done, escape from the evidence of such a deep-laid plot?

Nothing in those years gave them such joy as the news from Leribé. It appeared that their going had not meant death or even loss to the mission. They were to be reminded that the Gospel is not to be identified with the man who preaches it. The Basuto had been tempted to this faithlessness. Soon, however, they came to see that they had something else to do rather than bewail their lot. "Could their oppressors in driving their pastor into exile have torn from them their God, their Saviour, their faith, their love? No!" So they questioned among themselves, and in a spirit of

amity and love they took up the work; it was not the enthusiasm of a moment, and they remained faithful through the years of exile.

Makatoko the warrior had won fresh laurels for himself in the defence of the capital against the Boers; and till death he carried the scars. He had now taken the final step into the Christian life, and Coillard was quite satisfied that he was a Christian, not with a faith which was but the reflection of Coillard's own, but a Christian by root of heart. One day in July 1867 to their surprise he arrived at Ifumi to see his missionary. He had a wonderful tale to tell of the steadfastness of the little Church, about which they must have talked into the night. Makatoko had always been a noble character; even in the dark days of his paganism he had a chivalry and a fineness of perception which marked him out from among his fellows. Now there was something most touching in his humility and devotion.

Before Makatoko left for Leribé Coillard and he prayed earnestly that the way might be opened for the missionaries to return. The prayer was not to be granted for a while. In 1868 the Basuto accepted the British sovereignty, but the district of Leribé was left in the hands of the Orange Free State, which was still opposed to the return of the mission. Molapo might have used his undoubted influence in its favour; but Molapo was the same double-dealer as in former days. He would commend the Christians in eloquent words, and immediately afterwards persecute them. He threatened to kill one of his wives when she became a Christian, and on her refusal to give way he begged her to be faithful and to remember him in her prayers. Such a chief

could not be expected to use his power for the sake of Coillard. Besides he lived in the mission-house himself, and found it convenient.

The way out of Natal was opened at last on July 4th, 1868, not at first to the old station, but to Motito in Bechuanaland. For two years Moffat, who was still at Kuruman, had had the oversight of this station; but he could do this duty no longer. It was not by Coillard's own judgment that he was led to Motito; he went simply as an act of obedience to his Society. Someone was needed at this station, one of the earliest founded by the Paris Society, and there was no one for the task but himself. His brethren desired him to go; without questioning their decision he set aside his personal feelings and took the four-hundred-mile journey to Motito. This was his first experience of the life of a wanderer; and for all but a few years a stranger and a pilgrim he remained till the end.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH WITHIN THE TRIBE

1868–1875

Then—with a new-born strength, the sweet rest over,
Gladly to follow the great white road once more;
To work with a song on our lips, and the heart of a lover,
Building a city of peace on the wastes of war.

P. H. B. Lyon.

From their earliest days both François and Christina had a great reverence for Robert and Mary Moffat. During the long evenings in Asnières while his mother was stripping the hemp, François had read to her the book of Moffat's travels; and in Edinburgh Christina had been inspired by the same story to look to Africa.

They were struck by the quiet efficiency of the veteran missionaries within whose parish they were now for a short time to work. "They have evidently a will of their own," Coillard said, "and would not endure opposition easily." Dr Moffat was busy upon translations; though his muse was very fruitful, the poetry in his two collections Coillard found lamentable. But the hero of his childhood proved a truly lovable character, and it was easy for him to understand Moffat's popularity in England: though he had half a century of service behind him he was still young in heart.

In Kuruman they met also John Moffat and his wife, and with them they had much sympathetic talk. They agreed that missionary societies were not scriptural, and that each Church should have its own missionary; but how without some co-ordination this could be accomplished and how co-ordination is possible without some sort of society, the records of the conversations do not tell. They agreed less upon the orthography to be adopted for native languages.

In the glow of love which came to the Christian churches after the journeys of Livingstone, the London Missionary Society had sent missionaries to the Makalolo. Of these Mr Price, a son-in-law of Robert Moffat, was one of the few survivors, and at Kuruman Coillard heard from him of the sufferings which he had endured. He had already explored the ground which Coillard was to cover. Years afterwards at a meeting in Exeter Hall, when all men were acclaiming the heroism of Coillard, he singled out from the audience Mr Price, who was spending his last years in England, and said:

> We have a custom in South Africa among the blacks—when a man kills a bird, he never eats it himself, but he lays it at the feet of his senior; and if I had killed a bird to-night I think it would be my duty to lay it at the feet of my dear brother who is here now and whom I have not seen for more than thirty years, the Rev. Roger Price of the London Missionary Society—the true pioneer of the Barotse Mission.[1]

Coillard had fellowship also with Mr Sykes, one of the founders of the Matabele Mission, who was to prove a friend in need in after years at the court

[1] Mackintosh, p. 420.

of Lobengula. It struck Coillard with wonder that Sykes and Thomas, his colleague, had worked more than ten years among the Matabele without one conversion—"Mr Sykes is a man of faith." In this period of his life he also met John Mackenzie, one of the makers of modern Africa.

The stay of Coillard at Motito was not long enough to call for much comment; he followed the methods which he had proved in experience at Leribé. After the station was ceded to the London Missionary Society, Coillard left it and paid visits for a while to various other stations. Christina had a serious attack of dysentery during this time, and while she was still weak, Coillard himself was laid aside with sickness. "A wagon makes a sorry hospital"; by a strange oversight they were travelling without medicines, but an L.M.S. missionary hearing of their distress came to the rescue. It seemed to Coillard as if once more he had been brought within sight of death to make him familiar with it. A tropical climate still exacts a heavy toll from white people; but it was even heavier fifty years ago.

Their hope of returning to Leribé was fulfilled on May 9th, 1869. It does not appear that definite permission had been given; indeed it was only as travellers that they were allowed at first to return to their house, but their continued presence was winked at, and from that time until 1875 their lives centred in Leribé.

Coillard and Christina found their house dilapidated, ruined, and dirty; its walls shone with grease and ochre. But though there were ruins spiritual as well as material in the station, it was a great

pleasure to find how much the work had prospered; there were indeed thirty-two candidates to prepare for baptism. Much attention had to be given to building from the hour of their return. The chapel which was being built before the exile was now only a ruin and services had to be held in the open air. That made a serious interruption in the services of the church whenever the rain fell or the sun beat down upon the worshippers. Coillard pictures himself with a calico umbrella over his head, seeing before him dark eyes peering out from under the mats with which his hearers were sheltering themselves.

The story of these years, 1869-75, in the Coillards' life is not one that can be traced in detail. It is only possible to halt at certain moments in the journey; and for the rest to picture the two busy upon the routine of a mission station.

For the purposes of evangelization Coillard could now depend upon a band of zealous converts, chief among them Nathanael Makatoko, who thought that there could be no joy on earth like that which is tasted when a soul turns to God.

Sometimes François had to visit other stations for conferences, in which his judgment steadily grew in influence. He knew well what it meant to have "perils of rivers"; and his letters to his wife told sometimes of his thoughts for her as he went down into the deep waters of the ford. At home there were the schools, the services, the journeys round the out-stations; and no doubt reports for the Society in Paris. There were moreover songs to be written, and translations made. A missionary among a primitive people has to be pastor and prophet and poet as well; he has to

build and to plant; he must teach the young and comfort the old. It is a busy life of which the most important doings cannot go into reports.

It had always been Coillard's aim to share so far as possible in the doings of his adopted tribe. If it was necessary to separate his people sharply from customs which carried in them the vices of paganism, he was all the more eager to show that the Christian did not shirk his part in the ordered life of the tribe. One day there was a general corvée, called by the chief for the weeding of the wheatfields. Several thousands of men led by the under-chiefs were there. It was a day of feasting and excitement. They sang, they skipped, they applauded. There is always confusion in a pagan feast. The Christians among the others, old and young, were toiling hard. They were singing, but their voices were drowned in the hullabaloo. Into their midst Coillard rushed, with a mattock in his hands, chanting a popular song. This is the prose translation of the words:

Lessouto, the land of our fathers:
It is the fairest of all lands,
For it is there we were born,
There we grew up,
That is why we love it.[1]

All the pagan chants ceased; around the group of Christians the crowd gathered and gradually took up the strain:

O Saviour, save Lessouto!
Make an end of wars and troubles!
Oh—how this land—this land of our fathers
Would rejoice in the blessings of peace!

[1] E. Favre, Vol. II., p. 187.

Thereupon everyone assembled to hear the discourse of the chief and the orators, for the Basuto is a lover of oratory. At Molapo's request Coillard offered a prayer. Then the Christians broke through till they came to the royal circle, and standing there they took up the same chant. Molapo was beside himself with joy, and made an excellent discourse, comemnding the task of building the school and the church upon which they were about to begin. Coillard also spoke and was received with shouts of applause.

I am happy [he wrote] to seek this occasion to show the tribe that the Gospel does not destroy the citizen and does not teach rebellion.

On April 11th, 1870, Molapo came under the protection of the British power, and the mission had no longer anything to fear on the political side, from either the chief or the Boers. But they were to find that there were other weapons still left in the hands of the chief.

The same day on which the submission of Molapo to the British representative is recorded, there is entered the note, "We are beginning to build the church." All seemed clear now for the permanent establishment of the Church of Christ in Leribé. Trouble came from afar. It will be remembered that 1870 was the year of the Franco-German War, and Coillard was a man with a passionate love for France. The sorrow of a patriot for his country will not be less when he is in a distant land. The fair land of France was devastated by war, and its pride humbled in the dust. He could but wait for news with his heart filled with sorrow for his people,

and for his own home circle, caught as it was in the tempest. "His heart," wrote Christina of her husband, "bursts with indignation and pity." He found a difference between his point of view and that of his Swiss colleagues. When they heard of the surrender of the Emperor they said, "At least there are ninety thousand men saved!" To Coillard it was an act of incomparable cowardice; but there only his heart spoke.[1]

For the life of the mission the war with its sequel brought straitened means. The building of the church, however, was not discontinued, and friends in Natal and elsewhere came to the rescue of the mission. One gift of seventy-five francs came from a German missionary whom Coillard had known; it was a gift which brought peculiar joy to the wounded heart of the missionary, who saw in it a sign that in Christ there were no barriers of race.

At Whitsuntide, May 28th, 1871, the beautiful church was dedicated. It was built of stone 70 feet by 34 feet, and it had ten windows; there was room for six hundred people. To the festival other missionaries gathered, and there was quite an encampment within the garden and all round the house. Nearly three hundred Christians came from other churches—elders, catechists, and delegates. Christina's hands were full. On the Sunday, being the Day of Pentecost, they went in procession to the church, chanting hymns. At the door they halted and Coillard opened it "in the

[1] In a letter to his mother he poured out all his anxiety for her: now where would she pass the winter? where were all his kinsfolk? Night and day they were in his thoughts. He was trying to send help by the hands of his wife's mother and sisters; but he felt helpless and poor.

name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." He himself placed the Word of God in the pulpit; and afterwards M. Jousse preached on the word "Ebenezer." As on other occasions, Coillard had written hymns, which Mabille had had printed on sheets and distributed. The songs carried him back to Asnières:

Saviour, take possession of this house which we dedicate to Thee. Do not stay only in passing but make here Thine abiding dwelling-place. But canst Thou dwell here? Yes; Thou wilt dwell here, though the heaven and the earth cannot contain Thee. Oh, incline Thine ear to us when we pray in this place. When we shall learn here, may it be Thou that shalt teach us. Oh, bestow upon us Thy Holy Spirit, open the channels of heaven and let there be on every side nothing but abundant rains and torrents of blessing!

This will show how Coillard would weave together the ancient words into a song which his simple folk could sing. The third of the hymns had for its theme "Here is our Ebenezer!"

Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I'm come!

Such was the spirit in which on this joyful day the Church of Christ in Leribé entered into its dwelling-place.

The crowning moment came when they kept the Holy Communion with three hundred communicants. First for the missionaries and their wives the service was in French; and there was deep emotion when they chanted in their own tongue, "Gloire soit au Saint-Esprit." Then the brethren served the others at the Sacred Feast. "A ray of divine light had

shone upon us in this sacred place; we were in the company of angels: the door of heaven was opened: and we also like Jacob heard the voice of God speaking to us for a future of blessing and of prosperity."

In 1871 John Nkele, the first convert to be baptized by Coillard, finished his earthly fight in triumph. In him the Frenchman had found the words of M. Casalis fulfilled. That teacher had bidden his students seek for fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters among the Africans in recompense for all that they left behind in their own land. John was one of those brothers promised by the Saviour. The intense passion of Coillard's heart, not for masses but for individual men and women, is revealed in his words to his mother:

> If he had been the only fruit of my ministry in Africa I should not have laboured in vain, and you, my well-beloved mother, would find in the salvation of one such beautiful soul a great recompense for all the sacrifices which you have made for God.

The death of Nkele, followed by a tragic event in the village in which two young women were stricken down by lightning, led to a widespread awakening of interest in the Gospel; but in the presence of the new opportunity Coillard felt himself held back by the lack of support at the home base. Some of his friends had allowed their interest and support to grow less and in some cases cease altogether. They had consoled themselves for this by giving him a rendezvous in heaven! Coillard knew how to appeal in direct and simple language:

> When I receive a letter from some servant of the British Government, I read in thick letters on the large

envelope which encloses it, *On Her Majesty's Service*; that gives to the paper an astonishing importance. Well then! Read also at the head of my letter, in fiery letters, these words, *On the Saviour's Service.*

In 1872 the Church in Basutoland, in order to ensure a uniformity of method and ecclesiastical discipline, became organized on the Presbyterian model. It was becoming more and more necessary for the Christians to have instruction upon their bearing in civil life. In his short life of Coillard M. Dieterlen suggests that the missionaries were led away by an exaggerated conception of their authority and by too theoretic an idea of the right of the Church; this led them prematurely, he claims, to establish rules which struck directly at the interests and passions of the chiefs and their people. Molapo was roused; he demanded whether he would have the right to a seat at the great "Khotla" of the Church (Synod). Coillard told him of the place he might have if only he came back to the Faith. Such pleas moved him at the moment, but not for long. His suspicions were aroused; in the heart of an African chief there was always a readiness to suspect rivals or traitors within the camp. He was unable to persecute the missionaries, but in every imaginable way he tried to hurt the Christians among his people.

It is necessary to see things as he saw them with his warped eyes. Here in his land there was now a rival authority; a khotla in which he had no rights, a law which might run counter to the custom of his tribe, and make him a king only in name. The political and social order in a primitive tribe is not a thing of to-day, or yesterday. It has its

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roots deep in an immemorial past. Its varied customs hold together. There is but one khotla for all things, civil and sacred, and the whole life of the tribe finds its coherence in the chief. Let one prop of the manifold fabric be withdrawn, and what guarantee could there be that the whole would not be in ruins? Molapo, with the acuteness of a very able man, beheld not so much the coming of a moruti, but the beginning of an empire within an empire; he feared that the establishment of a new society meant the disintegration of the familiar and sacred order of his fathers.

Such a conflict as took place between Molapo and the missionaries is inevitable. Those who bring the Gospel into the life of a primitive people see the ancient story of the clash between Church and State unfolded swiftly, and sometimes not without blood, before their eyes. The Gospel must bring with it the Church; its preachers, though they do not seek to destroy but to fulfil, through their teaching are calling their converts into a society which cannot be tribal; a society into which indeed a believer from any tribe is admitted, from which an unbeliever, even though he be a chief in his own tribe, is excluded. The problem of the relation between the civil and the religious life of a community is set before them sharply defined; and all who have any imagination will spare some pity for the chief, even for such a chief as Molapo, who has to face problems which have engaged and baffled the thought of the wisest of men.

It is indeed one of the standing problems of the mission field, how to build up a Church without disintegrating a tribe. The French Mission in

Basutoland has been for the most part successful in this delicate task; but for a time in Leribé the establishment of the new Church discipline meant an outbreak of pagan rage, which crushed for a moment the spirit of Coillard. He could have borne it better if he had not been troubled at the same time by a mood of lethargy in the Church itself. The year 1873 began in deep sadness. Molapo was taking away the cattle of Christians and doing all he could to disperse them. Nathanael in particular was suspected by him as David was by Saul. Some members of the Church had fallen away; others were absorbed in material interests; the school had become very small. In his diary Coillard writes:

January 12th, 1873. Save me from the great waters. The overflowing waters carry me away; the rage of the heathen, the lethargy of the Church, the wickedness, the corruption of my heart! Oh, what waves, what tempests!

On the 15th he went to Molapo, and as a Hebrew prophet would have spoken he addressed the chief:

My master! I have not come to chat, but on business. This village is my village; here I am neither a stranger nor a thief. Moshesh himself set me here, and when I see that you are setting fire to it, how could I be silent? When I think of you, son of Moshesh, two things appal me: the first is that you make yourself the servant of Satan, by publishing throughout the land that whoever dares to come to divine service will be your enemy and you will take away his cattle; the second is that you do not scruple publicly to trample under foot the Sabbath; if I tell you of a Church Festival for that very day, the Sabbath, you hold a feast of circumcision at the house of Motta-koula. You take the wool to market

on the Sabbath and you hold your levies on the Sabbath. That appals me and I ask you whether there is no Gamaliel among your counsellors to prevent you from making war upon God ?

Molapo answered by lashing out at the laws of the Synod, at the Christians, at Nathanael, cursing them because they would not work for his concubines.

It was the clash of two systems ; and while the cruelty and persecution by the chief cannot be defended, it is possible to read in his bewildered mind some suspicion that his position was threatened, and to understand why he resented the laws of the Synod. The State was jealous of the Church. It was a conflict in the heart of it almost as old as human society ; and Molapo in his cunning and cruel fashion was resisting as the head of a civil order the claims of a spiritual society within his borders. He was telling the Church not to touch politics. It may be admitted that the missionaries, in their eagerness to establish a Church ordered and clear in its understanding of its duty, had not reckoned at their full power the inherited customs of the pagan tribes. The missionaries were theocratic to the core ; and civil authorities never take kindly to a theocracy. In an Africa where the chiefs resented words of praise addressed to the Almighty, and called for louder praises for themselves, the Church was certain to be suspected when it laid down laws which clashed with the authority of the civil power.

The trouble spread. Even Nathanael became too absorbed in temporal affairs and attached himself to Molapo, though only for a brief moment.

Of the Christians who had rejoiced at first to suffer persecution many could not endure the wrath of the chief. The storm did not die away quickly; but in the autumn of the year M. Paul Berthoud, visiting Leribé, reported that the spiritual work was prospering and Coillard was richly blessed, though still surrounded by a pagan people. When visitors come, however, we do not show all our poverty.

With the church built and peace restored in Europe, Coillard began to turn his temporary abode into a permanent dwelling-place. There were the hindrances he expected from rains, workmen, and the lack of pence; but he did not give up his plans.

By the end of 1873 both Christina and François were feeling the need of a furlough. They planned in 1875 to return to France. Seeing storm after storm burst upon them they had come to think that the unending struggle might weaken them; they needed to be refitted in spirit for their tasks. In 1874 there are in his diary premonitions that Coillard was longing for a new access of power. "Revival in Scotland! Revival in India! But when here? When, Saviour?" It was a time of heart-searching. There are words of bitter self-reproach in his diaries, and his words are not to be read as though they were idle or merely morbid. There was at this time a strain of morbidity in Coillard which may be but the over-emphasis of a scrupulous conscience; but when he cries out for the first love of his early days and for the freshness of his experiences on the Jura mountains he is dealing with deep and terrible realities.

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?

Such were his thoughts as 1874 drew near to its close; on Christmas Day Major Malan arrived at Leribé, and the way of life took another sharp turn for Coillard.

CHAPTER VIII

TRYING DOORS

Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
TENNYSON, *Ulysses*.

ONCE more the story affords a study in the unlikely. As we have seen it is never the expected thing which happens in this romance. The peasant was delivered out of his straitened and unhappy life into the life of a student. The student, admirably fitted to be the pastor of a home church—a Rutherford at Anwoth, or a Baxter at Kidderminster — was despatched to Africa to be the pastor among a primitive people. The Frenchman was to spend the greater part of his life under the flag of Britain. But when he had reached the borders of middle age, the period of experiment might well have been ended. But once more the improbable came to pass.

Coillard was by this time settled in his station, where there was much to call out the exercise of his powers as an evangelist and pastor. There was a Church to be built up in its faith. Christina and he had made for themselves a home and a garden, and a garden in Basutoland is more than a thing of beauty. In the midst of a people emerging, though with slow and halting steps, out of paganism, he might have lived till he passed out of the sight of men. But for him there was to be no abiding place.

There have been in the records of African missions men fitted by nature for the trek—men with the heart of a wanderer. Livingstone went forth like a Ulysses with the passion of the love of Christ in his heart. He has left behind him the name of a restless wanderer with one undying purpose. But Livingstone was of the stuff from which adventurers are made; he would have wandered if he had never known Christ; it was in his blood. Coillard was made for quieter scenes. Yet when a new direction was suddenly given by the Divine hand to his life, he rose and obeyed; it should be said rather—they obeyed. The Power which had set the task would make them equal to it. It was indeed a hard problem in adaptation which their Lord had undertaken. But that was His part. It was enough for them to leave their ways to their all-sufficient and adorable Saviour.

"Da quod jubes et jube quod vis" (Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt) was the great word of St Augustine. That too was the master-word in the life of the Coillards. Once more, the politeness of the soldier is—obedience.

Africa has seen many treks. Tribes leave their home under the spur of want, or in the hour of defeat when the enemy is hot upon their trail. Or at times a people may seek fresh pastures, or liberty to follow their own ways. Then they put their goods into their wagons, yoke their oxen and cry "Trek!" In 1836 the Boers had made their famous trek to the north in order that they might keep their inherited customs and be free from the later settlers. Missionaries too had moved their headquarters to new lands with some of their African

friends to help them. But the trek with which this story has to do was an expedition of the Basuto Christians themselves. It was a raid in the name of the King of Peace which these new-born children of His were to begin.

For some time the French missionaries in Basutoland had been conscious that they needed a new spiritual power. They had become tired and stale —choked with the dust of their clods. In the hour of their need help came from Major Malan, who arrived from France to visit the mission. Major Malan was one of those passionately earnest servants of God, who bring from the army into His service the unhesitating and implicit obedience of the soldier. Such men are sometimes difficult for others to understand ; the Bible is their Army Code ; they have no patience with anything less than unquestioning obedience to the letter as they understand it. But they make great believers.

After the Conference of missionaries which Major Malan addressed there came a new understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit. They entered into a joy and energy irresistible. The outline of the themes sounds very familiar. The words which moved them, most congregations hear at frequent intervals with decorous attention. But there come times when words which speak of the glory of Christ, and the inheritance of the disciple in Him, and the call to make their bodies a living sacrifice, come with startling and revolutionary power. At the Conference at King William's Town Coillard and Mabille and others found themselves lifted to sunlit heights which had seemed inaccessible before.

Something had to follow. One day the three of them, Mabille, Malan, and Coillard, were climbing the slope after crossing the river Kei,

> when in obedience to an irresistible impulse we all three [wrote Coillard] sprang from our horses, knelt in the shadow of a bush I still see before me, and taking each other as witnesses we offered ourselves individually to the Lord for the new mission. . . . Immediately we remounted Major Malan waved his hat, spurred his horse, and galloped up the hill calling out "Three soldiers to conquer Africa!"

They were Frenchmen who knew the thrill of a noble sentiment; they were not afraid of the daring phrase; their countrymen, when for the Faith or against, were lovers of extremes. They did not live to conquer Africa; but they were true to their vow —Coillard in the great trek, Mabille in Basutoland, and Malan valiantly standing by them before God and men, till his short life was ended, and afterwards. They were not disobedient to the vision. "As far as we were concerned," said Coillard, "that was the true beginning of the Barotse Mission."

Another scene must be recalled to complete the picture. The Basuto Christians had been left without their pastors during the troubled years when the Boers, distrusting the influence of the French missionaries, had banished them. Their absence threw these Christians upon their own hidden and unclaimed resources, so that when Coillard and others returned they found their young Churches completely transformed. That new life which had come into the infant Church in Basutoland called for some expression. It had known reaction and felt the back-wash of paganism, but it was being

driven to a missionary task. The Church should be like the banyan tree, Coillard taught: "Each one of its mighty branches bears roots; each root that touches the soil and grows there, becomes a new trunk, which in its own time must spread its branches farther, and strike new roots."

In 1872 Mabille, seeking for some new field for the mission of the Vaudois Swiss to occupy, had travelled with certain Basuto catechists to the north of the Transvaal. On his return he left the evangelists in the Transvaal, saying, "It is time that you Basuto Christians should become in your turn missionaries; find out between the Limpopo and the Zambezi whether there is not a door open for you." In obedience to this call, Asser, with another catechist named Jonathan and two others, set out in 1874 to cross the Limpopo. "Asser was a very remarkable man, for a native. He had the true pioneering spirit and would not allow any hindrance, sickness, or danger to turn him back or break up his little band." He kept a diary of his journey, in which he recorded all their adventures, with many details of times and seasons and names. It is many miles from the station at Geodgeacht, where Mr Hofmeyr the missionary was their good friend, to Zimbabye, which was their farthest north. Their way led through lands in which the tribes were still strangers to the Gospel. The Banyai were under the cruel dominion of Lobengula, and life was insecure wherever his word was law. But they traversed the land of the Banyai till they reached Zimbabye. There they must have been parted by many mountains and rivers and by more than seven hundred miles from Basutoland.

It was a new movement in the life of the Church in Africa, when these catechists who had been Christians but a day went forth into unknown lands with their good news. These men did not lay the foundations of a mission; they made their journey, and returned with their challenge to Basutoland; but that journey was a remarkable portent of what would come to pass. Asser and his friends were a sign to their own people, and a pledge to the whole Church of Africa, that one day its sons would go forth to bring their own tribes to Christ. That has always been the way in other ages. It was made clear by these gallant explorers that this was to be the way in Africa.

"Ah! why could I not cut off my arms and legs," cried Asser on his return, "and make every limb of mine a missionary to these poor Banyai." At one meeting an old man rose at the back of the church: "Enough of talking," he said, "let us do something"; and advancing to the Communion Table he put down half-a-crown. Others gave gifts, money or cattle, great and small. Volunteers for service were ready to go upon this new enterprise of evangelization.

To the land of the Banyai they turned first of all; this was the first door to be tried. At the General Synod of the Churches in 1876 M. Dieterlen and four Basuto with their families were set apart for this mission of goodwill. Scarcely a month later the expedition came to an end; the missionaries were arrested by the Boers and imprisoned in Pretoria. The Boers would not have French missionaries north of the Limpopo, and in this harsh manner they shut the door. M. Dieterlen and his

fellows, after being fined, were compelled to return to Basutoland.

The Basuto were not ready, in spite of this check, to abandon their purpose. After a while the Transvaal Government thought better of its action, and agreed to allow a new expedition to travel, always provided it were conducted by one in whom they had confidence, and on other conditions. M. Dieterlen meanwhile had been given the oversight of the Normal School and was therefore not free to go. One man, Coillard, was marked out as the new leader: he was invited by his brethren to take charge of the trek.

Wherever the singular is used, it is only to save space; till the hour when Christina died, François and she had no life apart from each other. This new call could not be accepted lightly. Leribé was their home, and life there had grown fascinating. The church and the house had been built; and both husband and wife were now no longer young, for youth melts away more quickly in such a life as theirs than in more settled lands. They were too on the point of returning to Europe for their first furlough after twenty years in Africa. But they had received a call from their brethren, and that to the Coillards was not to be disobeyed. They were opposed to all anarchy in the Christian community. Once for all François in the early days of his Christian life had turned his back upon a churchless Christianity, on the ground that it spelt anarchy. The call of his brethren was recognized by him as the call of his Lord. The inward preparations of his heart, in which he sighed to conquer Africa, were claimed, but in a way he had never expected.

Ready for anything, he had to do this thing. In the language of his own school of piety he was "to be poured from vessel to vessel."

To those who can look upon this life from a detached standpoint it becomes clear that for Coillard's own spiritual life the call was not without purpose. For such a man there are dangers in introspection; he is deeply imaginative and scrupulous and liable to moods of depression. But the head of a trek into the heart of a wild and primitive people cannot spare too much time for broodings; and the pastor whose church for months must be a wagon is not likely to lose himself in introspection.

The expedition to the Banyai which Coillard led dates from April 1877 to July 1879; it is best understood as an attempt to try whether this door or that would open. The process is one familiar in the story of the Christian Church. It is the process which the life of the world follows. Where it can it breaks a way. There is always proceeding the method of elimination. One door after another is tried and will not open, till there is but one left. But much is learned and much done in the experimental stages.

The caravan is composed of three wagons [Coillard wrote] and three tents. The expedition includes the four evangelists, Asser, Azael, Andreas and Aaron, with their wives and some of their children. Besides these, we have three young men from Leribé who have volunteered to lead the teams and graze the cattle. Eleazar, the driver of our wagon . . . is one of the evangelists from Morija. He was burning with the desire to go to the Banyai in that capacity, but his wife would not hear of it; and it was thereupon that with her consent he offered himself to drive our wagon.

. . . Four Bapeli have joined us for the sake of returning to their own country and they try to make themselves useful.

With them too went Coillard's niece Élise, who had come out to Natal while her uncle was there. She became one of the family, and both in Leribé and through the years of wandering she shared their life. Such was the company who set out upon this expedition. It will be seen that it was quite a small band—a compact society with an order of its own. It was their rule to start before daybreak, and travel late into the night. Family prayers were conducted morning and evening; and at the chief halts prayer meetings and services. It was the church in the wagon, the only church which Coillard was to know for many days.

The Banyai lived to the north of the Transvaal. It was from one of their chiefs, Masonda, that the expedition met with its first perils. From this point much of the story of Coillard's life will be concerned with the chiefs into whose lands he entered. They proved to be for the most part able and powerful men, who could not be ignored. The chief in all such primitive tribes, organized as they are on the patriarchal system, is a figure of importance for all who would win a hearing. He holds the keys. To win the chief, or to lose him, is no trivial matter. Much of the interest therefore in African missionary history turns upon the struggle for the souls of these men. Moshesh, Molapo, Lobengula, Lewanika, had all of them not only the power which belongs to a sacred office, but in themselves they were men with much subtlety of mind, and with an uncanny insight into the devices of

European settlers. Coillard had had a severe discipline already in the ways of chiefs; he had known Moshesh and Molapo: but in the trek which he had begun he was to have fresh revelations, both of the ability and the depravity and treachery of African chiefs.

Masonda, chief among the Banyai, invited the missionaries to visit him. He dwelt upon one of the summits which seem to overhang the plains. "Above the labyrinthine valleys rose tier upon tier of heights, colossal piles of granite boulders interspersed with tropical vegetation." On such a height, like an eagle in his eyrie, the chief welcomed them. No one could have been more courteous than he at first. Then they called on him, but did not see him. He deputed his brother to do the honours of the capital. This man, blind in one eye, and deeply pitted with smallpox, pretended to help Mme. Coillard to climb a steep slippery rock. "Where are they leading our mother?" asked the Basuto evangelists. "I started," wrote Coillard, "as if out of a trance." In front of them was the sharp peak; right and left no sign of a habitation; beyond, nothing—an abyss! Coillard sprang forward and snatched his wife from the savage, while Aaron rescued Coillard's niece; and together they regained their camp. Masonda was annoyed at their departure, and came himself to call. His studied etiquette was of great interest; he had easy manners, and his countenance sparkled with intelligence. But Masonda did not approve of the blanket which had been presented to him; he wanted powder. The missionaries had not come to sell powder. Masonda was sulky when he had his denial. He came once more, repeating his former

request, and sat sulkily by the fire; he would not go; he wanted a dog, then two, and at last, "I shall come back to-morrow," he said. In the morning Coillard gave the order for the wagons to move. Masonda appeared, trembling with rage: "Powder! caps! a gun!" he shouted; and though he was persuaded to accept an ox in place of the one he had given, he did not stay away for long. The last sight they had of the chief showed him standing on a rock, and foaming with fury, disposing his troops so as to surround them.

Masonda was now prepared to dictate his terms: there was nothing to hinder him. He might have made an end of Coillard and his people. He had indeed resolved to do so when they first visited his capital. Only a word was needed; but the word was not spoken. It may have been the calmness of the white people which paralysed the Banyai. After going a little way, the wagon sank in a muddy stream. Christina and Élise sat down quietly to sew. Such absence of fear has a singular power over such a primitive tribe. Coillard too had not been in Africa for twenty years without knowing how to speak with a chief. He could speak on occasion as one chief answering another. Masonda had stolen seventeen oxen; Coillard sent this message to him: "Understand that these seventeen oxen are not mine; they are the property of the God whom we serve, and who has delivered us. Beware of slaughtering them; tend them well; and one day it will not be I who will send for them, but you who will bring them back to me yourself —every one!"

But when all allowance is made for these factors

—the calmness and dignity of the travellers—they themselves fell back upon the assurance of their Faith, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." Men will always differ when they try to explain by what means the spiritual Presence guards the faithful; but the experience itself a thousand witnesses confirm. The Peace of God like a sentinel walks the ramparts, and they are safe within.

It is not surprising to learn that the Intelligence Department of the missionaries had been gravely at fault. They learned by bitter experience that they had been dealing with subject-peoples who were under the rule of the Matabele; and without knowing it, they had committed a grave breach of etiquette in daring to approach the Banyai without the consent of Lobengula, chief of the warrior tribe, the Matabele. To him, when this was discovered, Asser was sent, and for two months the caravan awaited his return in a land of terrors, and the shadow of death. But in their camp they carried on the work of the mission.

The Banyai were always fighting each other, but all trembled before Lobengula. When the message came from him it was a summons to Buluwayo, where the chief kept court. A corpulent but pleasant-faced man, clothed with a monkey-skin about his loins, Lobengula received them at first in silence. Afterwards he asked: "Where is your wife?" It was explained to him that among white people it is the gentleman who pays his respects to the ladies. "Ye bo! is that possible?" he asked.

The chief, as it proved, was most courteous to Christina and not once did he interrupt her; he

would not, however, discuss the business for which he had called them, but kept putting off the council of chiefs, which must decide whether Coillard and his helpers should be allowed to start a mission to the Banyai. So far as they could learn his mind, he did not want the dogs of Banyai to have missionaries. Lobengula had four in his own country from the L.M.S.; he wanted no more. It was a happy thing for the French pioneers that they had at that court, in Mr Sykes of the L.M.S., so true a friend; he did his best to win over the king and his head-men, but in vain. The Basuto were told they smelt of Molapo, the unworthy son of Moshesh, against whom the Matabele cherished the memory of a treacherous act: he it was who had handed over Langalibalele, one of their kinsmen, to his foes.

Day after day the missionary party had to witness the appalling cruelty of the king. At length the council of the head-men came to a decision, and the missionaries had to wait in Lobengula's court till he broke the silence. At sunset he spoke. For some two months he had treated them with cordiality. Now he would scarcely recognize them. "The heart of a king is unsearchable," said Coillard. Lobengula would have distinguished between the whites and their native helpers. But Coillard would not have it so; "the blow which strikes them strikes me first," he declared. The chief answered that had he known this he would have spoken differently, but he could not go back upon the verdict: Coillard must leave the country. After nearly a year's travelling this was the result.

The door into Banyailand was closed and barred. The door of nearly every Zulu tribe was shut against

those who came from Molapo's territory. But even while they were at Buluwayo the missionaries heard of a tribe north of the Zambezi where the Basuto language was spoken. That was to them a clue. What if they were called to carry the good news to another people speaking the tongue with which they were familiar? The exiles from that tribe said: "Why do you not come to us and save our nation?" It was from Barotseland that they came. Like the first enunciation of a theme in a symphony, the word "Barotse" was heard.

The Banyai expedition was a bitter experience; but it left with them the inspiring memory of the brave pioneers in Matabeleland, Mr Sykes and his colleagues, who had to sow so many years with no harvest; and they could not forget the months which they had spent among the Banyai. The latter would remember the whites and blacks in their strange garments, with their rolling houses drawn by oxen; and perhaps some recollections would remain of the bell which called them to worship, and the divine stories which the strangers told them, stammering their language. It was Coillard's belief that the wagon must become wherever it went a church of Christ. He never halted without making set occasions for worship and for preaching the good news. For years it was his mission-station, as well as his home; and those who know the long memories of primitive peoples will not think the hopes of Coillard to be illusory. They remember Nyaka (Livingstone) to this day in Central Africa; and he too had no abiding place.

From the land of the Matabele Coillard and his party journeyed to Shoshong where Khama, chief

of the Bamangwato, had his capital. For a time they lived under the protection of this noble chief, whose death is reported as these pages go to press. Bechuanaland is a dry and thirsty country; but it proved an oasis to these travellers. There they met with the Hepburns, warm-hearted Scots at the head of the London Mission. They had the encouragement of Khama himself, who had confessed the Christian faith in his youth, and remained to the day of his death faithful to his Master. The tired pilgrims had come to a place of refreshment, where they rested awhile and faced the alternatives.

At a vast meeting of five thousand people, though it was harvest-time, Khama himself pleaded with Christians for their missionary obligation. It was a striking contrast; Molapo, Masonda, Lobengula, and now Khama the Christian chief! What Khama's life has meant to his own people, all the world knows; but what his Christian character has meant to the other chiefs of his day is not perhaps so well known. They weighed him in the balance; they respected him; some of them followed him part of the way, but there they halted, and the thought sometimes will not be repressed—what might not Africa have been had other chiefs followed Khama all the way? But when the blame is apportioned, it may be that the heavier part of it will not be borne by the chiefs themselves.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAD AGAIN

Only the road, and the dawn, the sun, the wind and the rain,
And the watch-fires under stars, and sleep, and the road again.
JOHN MASEFIELD, *The Seekers.*

"OURS is a land of blood," the refugees from Barotseland had said to Coillard in Buluwayo. It was indeed a land of blood. Thither the Makololo —who were Basuto—had trekked somewhere about 1845, and established a rule of terror on the Upper Zambezi. Livingstone visited them on his journeys (1851–5) and on his return to England had so interested the country in the great chief Sebitoane, and his people, that an expedition was sent by the London Missionary Society in 1859 to this tribe. The two missionaries, Helmore and Price, with their families reached the south bank of the Zambezi after terrible sufferings. Sebitoane had died; and his son proved a traitor. The expedition was plundered, and as some believe, poisoned, and all but Mr Price and two of the Helmore children died. Livingstone, not for the only time, spoke to the Makololo, as Isaiah might have spoken: "You have killed and plundered the servants of God, whom you invited into your country; and the judgment of God will fall on you." The judgment which always falls soon or late upon those who take the sword, fell upon the Makololo. Their

vassals, the Barotse, rebelled and slew them, leaving not a trace of those grim warriors. In Central Africa, where memories are vivid, they still recount how the prophecy of Nyaka was fulfilled.

The Barotse had learned the language of the Basuto from the Makololo, and they still continued to use it when they became an independent tribe once more in 1866. To those who, like Coillard, were quick to discern signs of their calling this fact pointed the way to the Zambezi.

But Coillard as he waited at Shoshong was in some perplexity. His Basuto helpers were home-sick and demanded to be taken back to their own country.[1] Letters which arrived in Basutoland from Paris were not of a nature to authorize him in entering upon a great adventure beset with unknown difficulties. On the other hand he had the encouragement of Khama; and an offer of help from Mr Westbeech, the only trader who had his position established in Barotseland. He had moreover the grave responsibility of leadership over a young Church making its first missionary venture. The only alternative to Barotseland at the last, after the possibility of retreat had been set aside, was to settle in Mozila's territory, adjoining Matabeleland. Lobengula had suggested Mozila as a suitable subject for the missionary's teaching; and without doubt he needed it. But the same reason which barred the door to the Matabele—the unforgiven sin of Molapo—would bar the door to their neighbours.

There remained the Upper Zambezi. But it was necessary to explore first of all. The Coillards therefore with their niece, and with Asser, Azael, and

[1] H. Dieterlen, *François Coillard*, p. 43.

Eleazar, but without the catechists' families, formed the new caravan. The letters from the brethren in South Africa, bidding Coillard seek a field of labour in the Transvaal near the river Limpopo, arrived too late to allow of any alteration in their plans: otherwise Coillard's strict loyalty to his company would have prevailed to hold him back. But among the letters which came in time there was one from Lawes of Papua, which brought him encouragement. The words are worth quoting, since they came to the missionaries as a message straight from God: "I felt sorry to leave the work on Savage Island, but the call to harder work, more self-denying work, is an honour from the Master's hands. Does He not in this way deal with His servants? Is not the reward of service in His Kingdom more service, harder service, and (measured by human standards) less successful service?" It was precisely the appeal to move Coillard and his wife. It touched the Christian chivalry within them, which led them to seek the zone of fire as the place of glory.

They started in June 1878. Christina was carried on a litter of Coillard's making; Élise rode a donkey; the rest went on foot. The man whom Khama sent with them as ambassador to Lewanika, the Supreme Chief of the Barotse, had been chosen on the ground of his rank, and proved to be of no use as a guide. He lost them three days—a high price to pay for his rank.

Once more the Church was in motion for the time being across the desert. In comparison with other journeys this stage to the Zambezi brought no great perils from unfriendly chiefs; but it was a test of endurance. More than once Coillard interjects, "Quel voyage!" (What a journey.) A waterless

region, without shade and very lonely; a desert land impregnated with salt; and overhead the sun in its strength! And all the time, like the Israelites in the wilderness, the poor Basuto looked back with wistful eyes to their home. Often beneath the stars Coillard watched by the camp while they slept. Christina suffered in health, and, as François enters in his French diary, she felt "homeless," but no word of complaint came from her. In their moments of leisure they were reading together Carlyle's *Frederick the Great.*

On July 26th they pitched their camp at Leshoma, where they were to linger for months—it was to be their chosen halting-place south of the river. They had to seek high ground to avoid the tsetse fly, which at that time infested the banks of the river and threatened the cattle. At Leshoma they found the establishment of Mr Westbeech the trader, a big tent and some huts. There on Sunday July 28th the travellers held two services, one with their own people and the other in English; in the afternoon they invited the natives to a special service at which Asser and Eleazar and Coillard spoke of the love of Jesus. For the first time in that strange land they sang the Basuto hymn with deep emotion, and the name of Jesus was praised near the Zambezi: Massoutras, Barotse, Makololo, Bamangwato, Basuto, French, Scots, all with one voice singing:

Ke rata Yesu hoba o nthatilé.

Once more it was with song that these brave servants of God by faith greeted the unknown.

From Leshoma Coillard reported sad news from Barotseland: "The Barotse are at war; they have

arrested my messengers at Sesheke, or rather the messengers of Khama." And at once he questioned himself, whether or not he had been wise in pressing onwards into a labyrinth of difficulties; but his conscience acquitted him, and when he heard the hymn to Jesus his former hopes came back. Already the door seemed to move.

In the interval, before the messengers whom they had sent to Lewanika returned, Coillard and his small caravan visited the Thundering Smoke, as the Basuto call the Victoria Falls. It was to remain a land haunted by memories of Livingstone; wherever Coillard came and named himself moruti he was welcomed for the sake of the great doctor. It was even rumoured that he had conversed with the deity who hides beneath the abyss of waters. Wherever in Central Africa the traveller penetrated he discovered that Livingstone was there before him.

There were to be many delays before the chief of the Barotse, whose capital lay far up the river, could be reached. Leaving the camp at Leshoma Coillard with Eleazar and Asser pressed on to Sesheke, the first town across the river; there they waited, but the time was not wasted: "We, of course," said the missionary, "occupied ourselves with evangelization." No message came from Lewanika; and though the local chieftain urged them to wait, it seemed wiser to return to Leshoma. During the voyage Coillard, and at the same time one of his young men, fell ill. Coillard recovered, but Khosane died and was buried under a mahogany tree by the river. He had volunteered at Leribé; and his was the first life to be laid down that the road might be opened.

When the messenger came back from the Supreme Chief at the end of October he brought a polite but firm refusal. Lewanika indeed expressed his desire to see the missionary, but not yet; by the June of the following year it might be possible; his town which he was building would then be finished. Coillard had therefore with sad heart to abandon for the present the hope of establishing his mission beyond the Zambezi.

The first of the Basuto evangelists to die—for Khosane was not an evangelist—was Eleazar Marathane. There was the spirit of a gallant adventurer in him: "I have offered my life to the Lord; it is for Him to say where my grave is to be dug. For me it is all one—at the Zambezi as in Basutoland, heaven is near to us." There are many parallels to such brave words. Sir Humphrey Gilbert as his ship sank was seen to be reading a book, and his last words were: "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land." Such too was the joy of Bushman, the third of the four from Leribé, who died at Shoshong during the absence of the expedition; he said when he came to the river: "I have done with prayer, I praise."

Back they went from Leshoma to Shoshong, thence eastward to Valdezia in the north of the Transvaal. At this point in the story there enters into the life of the missionaries the romantic figure of the Portuguese explorer, Serpa Pinto. He had been travelling through Barotseland on his way across the Continent, and, exhausted with his journeys and with fever, he lighted upon the Coillard encampment at Leshoma. So deep an impression did his companionship with the missionaries leave

that a large section of his book he calls "The Coillard Family."

Christina and Élise were embroidering some coarse linen material when he came into the camp; it was a strange experience for the traveller to find himself once more in the presence of things long missed which belonged to his old life: the fine white tablecloth, the scrupulous neatness, the gentle manners—all these things moved Serpa Pinto so greatly that he wept. He was indeed on the verge of an attack of fever through which he was nursed back to life by his new friends, who were to him guardian angels; and he longed to tell the world of these obscure and gracious wanderers. Of Coillard he wrote:

> The missionary was warmly attached to the aborigines, to whose civilization he had devoted his life. Ever calm in gesture and in speech he never to my knowledge lost his temper, and never did I hear issue from his mouth other words than those of pardon for the faults he saw committed against him. François Coillard was, and is, the best, the kindest man I ever came across. To a superior intelligence he unites an indomitable will.

In his companion through long and perilous journeys Serpa Pinto discovered quite justly a true poet, as well as a Christian gentleman, and he found but one fault in François—he had not sufficiently keen sense of the bad faults in the natives! In the return journey to Khama's country through the Kalahari Desert, in which they found a route for their caravan, the Portuguese travelled with the Coillards—and a journey through a wild country with many hindrances and perils gives a good

opportunity for an estimate of character. Pictures of the wagon, "a marvellous wagon"—and of the day's round—glimpses of their life at festivals and on the Sabbath which they kept scrupulously—even records of some of their conversations, are to be found in Serpa Pinto's record of his travels.[1] The land through which they passed had most "discordant elements"; it was like the Sahara, at other times like the American pampas, or the steppes of Russia. There were many wild beasts, and creeping things of the earth to dread, as well as the drought, but through all these days their Portuguese visitor, who had little knowledge of Protestant missions or of the Reformed Churches, found in his friends a singular power and courage: "It was the courage of the early martyrs which it is given to few to fathom and experience. As for myself I declare that I do not fathom it, although it none the less excites my admiration." [2]

It was the calm faith in God that staggered this observer; he too, as he put it, believed in God, but he believed also in wild beasts, and in the power of the gun. Coillard, as he told a tale of escape, once said to him:

"We were all but lost." "But," I answered, "you had arms and ten armed and devoted followers to back you, so that under the circumstances you have described, there was an easy way out of the difficulty."

He shook his head and replied: "It could not have been done without shedding blood, and I could not kill a man to save either my own life or the lives of my people."

This was a new thing which the traveller could

[1] *How I Crossed Africa.* [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 205.

not forget; brave man as he was, he recognized that he was in the presence of an "icy courage" which he had tried to grasp in vain. The experience of Livingstone and Arnot confirmed that of Coillard; there is a strange power in those who will not use force; yet in reality it should not be strange if the Love which is at the heart of all things can find a way into this human scene.

Together they came to the friendly land of Khama, where they parted. After Coillard and his party had reached Valdezia, another door was slammed in their faces. It was Mochache, the priestess of the tribe to which they might have gone, who barred their approach. She held her sanctuary in a wooded gorge; no stranger was allowed to penetrate into her village. It could be seen from afar pitched on the mountain-side like an eagle's nest. For two days she made the missionary wait in order to heighten her dignity; her final answer was: "I have my god and I am his priestess; I do not want you or your God. Besides, your week has only seven days, mine has eight; so how could we ever come to an understanding? If I allowed you to come to me, either you would be in prison, or you would ruin my authority."

It was galling to a man, naturally proud and sensitive, to be rejected from one place after another. God had sent him, so he was told, to be an advertisement through the tribes of tropical Africa. This had been the sum of the matter. He had been willing to give himself, and the gift was not accepted. Only one ray of hope was shed on his way. At Seleka, in Khama's country, he was able to leave Asser and Aaron; their settlement would be a

finger-post planted on the way either to the Banyai, or to the Barotse.

Back from Valdezia to Basutoland! They were at their base again; but with no thought of abandoning their plan. Coillard begged to be allowed to go straight back to the Zambezi; but his Synod thought otherwise. So it was decreed that he must visit France to plead for the Zambezi work before it should be undertaken. Two plans were laid before the Synod. Mabille and Coillard, carried away by their faith, wished to throw the responsibility upon the Basuto Churches. Their colleagues, looking at the resources of the mission more coldly, thought that only the Churches of France were capable of undertaking this great task—only they could give the money and the men. After long deliberation they came to their decision.[1] Coillard and Christina left Leribé on November 18th, 1879, and arrived in Paris on March 9th, 1880.

Europe after twenty-six years of Africa was for the Coillards, to use their favourite language, an Elim after the desert. They found themselves famous in the circles of missionary enthusiasts everywhere. But if the old traveller had compared the fatigue which his wanderings in Europe gave him with the fatigue of long journeys in Africa, there would not have been much difference. Missionaries on furlough have been known to sigh for the wilderness. Elim is and may become very tiring when the dwellers there are missionaries and famous, and graced with charm of speech and bearing. Livingstone wrote from Africa declaring that he simply would not come to Europe and go

[1] H. Dieterlen, *François Coillard*, p. 47.

round as a beggar, but in his own time and way he became an incomparable beggar. Coillard went through many journeys in French-speaking lands in order to re-kindle missionary zeal, and at the same time to provide for a new expedition. France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Alsace, Holland, Belgium, the valleys of Piedmont, all were visited. Everywhere he was warmly received, but often he was disheartened by the ignorance and indifference of the Churches.

In London, in an underground railway station, Coillard read in a newspaper, "The Chief Molapo of Basutoland is dead." It was a reminder to him of his Basuto ministry: to this Chief Coillard had been a faithful prophet; and so far as human eyes could see, the man had been to the last an apostate, breathing out blasphemies against Christ. He had been a Christian once; he had understood; but afterwards he said that the things of God became like the sound of a chariot that has disappeared into the distance. Like other African chiefs he had a magnetic influence; he was born to command, and he made men seem little before him. Yet he came into the customary inheritance of tyrants—suspicion, and bitterness; and at times his reason seemed almost affected. He was manifestly a man with a divided heart. It was hard for him to kick against the pricks, but he never ceased to kick against them; he could never lose the memory of what he had known.

It must be admitted in justice to him that in many ways Molapo had been a sagacious leader to his tribe. There was in the story all the elements

of tragedy. No one had given more promise than this son of Moshesh. If when he was set over Leribé in his youth there could have been a missionary in residence, he might have remained faithful to Christianity. But he fell back, first tolerating pagan customs, and at last yielding to them and encouraging them. Nor did his dealings with the Boers and the other settlers help him to a better feeling for Christians. Who will apportion blame for such a life? But who can escape from the thought of what might have been. "Who can penetrate the secrets of a soul with his God? and who can say whether at the last hour this wandering child did not fall into the arms of his Father?" With that hope Coillard comforted himself.

It is not uncommon to find the lives of the great apostles summed up in the language of continuous triumph. Coillard did not so find life. For his tender nature, it was charged with failure; there were holy memories, but among them was the thought of men with whom he had pleaded and pleaded in vain. In his writings he never appears as a light-hearted man; and always upon his sensitive heart he bore the scars of many wounds. It was a life moreover in which his impetuous will had always to submit to delays. The first trek to Barotseland was made in April 1877. Sefula, the head mission-station in Barotseland, was not finally reached till September 1886, and the mission did not really begin till 1887. The years seemed to speed one after another. All was preparation and never the work itself. Yet often it happens in such a life that the years of preparation are not the least fruitful. It may well be that the very story of this

adventurous approach to door after door may have had its part in the spiritual history of Africa.

On another occasion it might be useful to estimate how far the waste of these years might have been saved. To-day with more accurate knowledge there is less room for these tentative missions, these adventures into the unknown. There is more science, less guess-work. But the qualities revealed by the pioneers can never be out-dated. There can never be a Church in which the spirit of the gallant adventurer is without its place. Not knowing what shall betide him, he goes forward; he is a soldier under orders. Whether to Leribé or Sefula, Christ goes before him and he follows. This will always be the glory of the Christian adventurer till the last station has been occupied by the Church of Christ. If not in the former way, then in some other that spirit will not be found wanting.

CHAPTER X

THE LONG APPROACH

We came with steps that faltered—Yet we came!

Through water and through fire
We came to Thee, and not through these alone,
We came to Thee by blood. Thou didst require
One only sacrifice, and like Thine own,
The life Thou gavest Thou didst desire,
And all was ready for us. Lo, the knife
And cloven wood were waiting; bound or free
We too were ready! In the battle strife
Or by the lonely altar, unto Thee
We offered love for love, and life for life;
Through swords, through seas, o'er sands of burning flame
We came to Thee! through toil and pain and loss;
Yea! all things failed us but the steadfast cross,
And hearts that clave to it while grief and shame
Still followed where we followed—Yet we came!

DORA GREENWELL

A Song—Which none but the redeemed can sing.

THE dwellers in wagons had to plead in drawing-rooms and before conventions; in this way they had to provide for themselves the necessary supplies for the new venture. They learned however through their journeys how much of interest in their work there was latent in the Churches, and how much passion was waiting to be kindled. It is characteristic of Coillard that he read not only the negro but the English and the Scots at their best.

In London he looked for signs of religious faith, and found them; the inscription over the Royal Exchange, *The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*—an inscription which has provided many a jibe for the satirist—rejoiced the heart of this man. Any act of kindness shown to him became a sacrament of the nation's goodwill.

Coillard's most intimate fellowship in this country was with the Mildmay School, if such a name may be given to the Evangelicals out of many Churches who found a common bond in their search for the deepening of the spiritual life. But he found much to encourage him from audiences of all kinds in the whirlpool of London. In coffee palaces—the date was 1880 or thereabouts, it will be remembered—he was surprised by the generosity of the poor; and he discovered in several cabmen brothers in Christ. He needed £5000 for the Barotse Mission. That was the occasion; but there is good precedent in the New Testament for the belief that the taking of a collection may be the occasion for a spiritual service of great power. Coillard without question was able to open a way for his hearers not simply to the Upper Zambezi, but to the hidden resources of the spiritual life.

Meanwhile in Africa one of the most intrepid of missionaries, Frederick Stanley Arnot, a gallant free-lance of Christ, had reached Lewanika, Chief of the Barotse, and had promised to remain with him till Coillard arrived.[1] Till April 1884, when a revolution broke out in Barotseland, Arnot persevered in his task. At first Lewanika told him he might teach, but not the Word of God: "It's not

[1] Ernest Baker, *Arnot, a Knight of Africa*.

nice: my people are not all going to die now No! No! You must not teach that in this country. We know quite enough about God and about dying." But afterwards he allowed Arnot to teach the Word. The school was an undertaking which was not received with much favour: the old folks did not wish their children to be wiser than they. But there was less for them to fear since most of the boys were under a secret sentence of death—sons of former kings, they were doomed to be killed when they reached young manhood. Barotseland was indeed a land of blood. This work of Arnot was brief: he pushed on to new stations where his name will be honoured for ever in the annals of the Church in Africa; but Coillard was the first to acknowledge how much he owed to this fearless adventurer who broke the ground for him.

It was in May 1882 that Christina and François left England and returned by way of Natal to Leribé, where they planned to make all preparations for the second approach to Barotseland. The Gun War had left Leribé deserted and dilapidated; it had been followed by a civil war, which hindered the travellers in their preparations. During the delay at their former home the mission in Basutoland celebrated its jubilee, with much rejoicing. But once more, there was some risk of cross-purposes between Coillard and his brethren. To him the one thing that mattered was an expedition fired by the passion of Christ for the souls of the Barotse: the idealist did not take sufficient account of ways and means, but some of his more cautious brethren looked at the business side of the undertaking. Thanks, however, to mutual

concessions an agreement was reached. It is always unfortunate when faith and business are pitted against each other; and Coillard was one of those idealists who need sometimes the kindly check of their brethren who sit down and forecast the bill which will be presented.

The expedition consisted of Coillard and his wife and niece; M. Jeanmairet, destined to marry Élise; evangelists Isaiah and Levi and another,[1] with their families; and two artisans, Waddell and one X, whose name is not given for reasons which will appear later, the one Scots and the other English. The second journey was begun without the splendid impetus of faith which had been with the travellers when the very Church itself in Basutoland had seemed to go with their apostles to the Banyai. That was in 1877; there was less of that enthusiasm in 1884. Many believed it was not the time for breaking new ground. But the Coillards had that quality which, as Sir Thomas Browne said, is called obstinacy in a bad cause, and is constancy in a good. They had had their call, and they had not had it rescinded.

They needed all their constancy. The door had been opened a little way; but the approach to it proved tedious and perilous. In January 1884 they left Leribé; not until August 1885 did they cross the Zambezi, and not till January 1887 did Coillard bring his wife to their first home in Barotseland. The expedition in its two stages lasted for ten years.

Coillard was fifty when they set out; and fifty in the tropics is more than fifty in Europe; and

[1] H. Dieterlen, *François Coillard*, p. 50.

at fifty even in Europe the physicians declare that a man must prepare for a life more of wisdom than of adventurous activity. But, said Coillard,

> I am a soldier, my marching orders are signed; I obey and start: if I fall others will take my place.

Shoshong was once more a pleasant resting-place. "Khama is always the same and he was overjoyed to see us." To him the mission presented a musical box which brought wonder and delight to the Bechuana people. It proved necessary to relieve Andreas, one of the two evangelists left at Seleka. Little had come of the work attempted there. The chief of the village was not friendly: from within the royal hut they could only hear the words in a sulky voice: "Go away with the rain, and may the rain follow you wherever you go! May God deluge you with rain! Thank you!"

While they were in Khama's country Lewanika sent a message to Khama: "The one we are looking for is M. Coillard; I am told he is on his way hither, and I ask you as a favour to help him so that he may come as quickly as possible."

The first objective of the caravan was Leshoma, where they had stayed six years before. But before they left Shoshong they took the Lord's Supper in the room of their respected friend Mr Whiteley: of that company Mr Whiteley and Mrs Hepburn are still living, but the rest are fallen asleep. With two draught oxen, a gift from Khama, and three milch cows from Mr Whiteley, and many other gifts, they started on their way—the long and exhausting desert-way—to the Zambezi. At

Leshoma, on a site ninety-eight feet above the valley, they saw their promised land on the other side of the great river. There they halted. Élise began a school among the children of the expedition and the Zambezi children. These missionaries once more carried their church and school with them. In Leshoma they came across many Zambezians with whom they had dealings of all kinds. These natives were not allowed to depart without learning some text from the Bible, or a hymn, which was explained to them.

The land to which the travellers had come is the land of the great river, the Zambezi. Many have told of its islands with their palm trees, and its solemn beauty, since the days when Livingstone first braved its swift currents and rapids. Its character north of the Victoria Falls varies greatly. It is enclosed by high wooded banks between Leshoma and Sesheke; afterwards the voyagers met constantly with rapids; at one place the river narrows to eighty yards; then the "scenery completely changes; the banks are flat and sedgy and before long they seem to fly away to east and west, leaving only a sedgy reedy shore, and the wide treeless plain of Barotseland opens out." [1] It is the river which determines the distinctive character which the Central African tribes of this region reveal. Their industries, their diversions, their food, their religion even, showed the power of the river. When it overflowed the plain, the inhabitants moved to high places. When it receded, they returned. The river marked their seasons, gave them food, provided the highway for their

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *The New Zambesi Trail*, p. 119.

processions; down the river at the last they carried their kings to their last resting-place, and near it they built their sacred tombs.

At this time the land had many tribes all subject to the Barotse king. The system was a feudalism, scarcely to be distinguished from slavery. "The members of the Barotse tribe were all free born; all were chiefs of various degrees, and the executive was entirely in their hands."[1] The members of the other tribes in this empire were subject to them. It was an oligarchy with the dominant tribe for its nobles.

At Leshoma the missionaries awaited news from the next place upon which their hopes were set, Sesheke. At first the tidings from the chiefs of that place, which is the gateway into Barotse-land, indicated that they were offended. They were waiting for their "salutation," which should have accompanied the letters. It appeared that the letters had been sent by the hands of slaves on foot, and in a land where there is a ritual of manners, this seemed to show them to be of no moment. But one day a file of men appeared at the ford of Kazungula with canoes to fetch Coillard to Sesheke; and thither on the following day he set out, and on arrival was received at the khotla with loud salutations.

Sesheke was an important place. There twelve or fifteen tributary chiefs had their headquarters. It was a village of dirty and broken-down huts, one of which was allotted to Aaron and Coillard. At once, while they waited for news from the king, they began to teach, but there was little

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

response but mimicry: "They beat time like us, speak in the same tone and repeat our every word. Some lie down, others sit; they take snuff, chatter, laugh, and salute each other by clapping their hands." The chiefs of this people were as rapacious as the rest, and only sometimes sober; at that period they were secretly engaged in plotting the destruction of the king, Lewanika. He had certainly not deserved much affection; once he had murdered seven chiefs in one day at a banquet to which he had invited them. But of the plots Coillard knew nothing at the time. In Sesheke Coillard came nearer than he had been before to the abyss of Zambezian paganism. He had known paganism in Basutoland and among the Zulus and other tribes, but he had never touched the depths into which he looked at Sesheke; but he added:

> I believe that under the pile of all that is hideous and odious in paganism we shall find men, and men whom we shall love.

Office and life were held on a short lease by the Zambezians; the chiefs were always in terror of each other. When a message came from the king they did not know what it might portend, and the ostensible meaning might hide some sinister threat.

At length Coillard learned that there had been a revolution in the Valley and Lewanika had fled. The lords of Sesheke could not contain their delight, and after ten in the morning during those days it was rare to find a man sober. The land, always restless and troubled, was now in chaos; and

there was nothing for Coillard and Jeanmairet (who had joined him) to do but take the opportunity of a lull and return to Leshoma.

Sesheke had become to them a Slough of Despond. Leshoma seemed a fresh and verdant place. The members of the party who had remained behind had been hard at work. A rustic hamlet was rising under the hands of Waddell and the others. There at dawn the bell called to prayer; and everyone afterwards went to his work. Coillard had made investigations into the language and found that within three hundred miles of the Victoria Falls in either direction the people spoke Sesuto, somewhat as peasants might speak French, but they quite understood good Sesuto. In this period of his life he came to see, more clearly than he had ever seen before, the open sore of slavery. Once a boy was offered to him for " a hat, a waistcoat, two or three handkerchiefs and some beads." It was a horrible choice, but it was impossible to open a slave-market, and the little boy had to pass away out of sight across the valley with his cruel guardians.

In November 1884 the young king Akufuna, whom the rebels had enthroned in place of Lewanika, sent messengers for Coillard, with twenty young men to carry the baggage. The packing was done and sixteen chiefs were waiting at the river, when Christina was taken ill. That the illness of a woman should delay them was a new and surprising fact to the Barotse. When Coillard was able to leave her, he made the journey without much difficulty to Sesheke, and thence up the river to Lealui. Christmas Day he spent on the journey.

He was conscious of an intimate fellowship with his dear companion; and at the same time the work of his new mission loomed before him more gigantic and more needful than ever.

At the Falls of Ngonye one of his guides begged him to make an offering to the spirit of the waterfall; and when he refused, the horror-stricken Barotse uttered this incantation: "O Nyambe, thou who inhabitest these abysses, appease thy wrath! These white people are poor and have nothing to offer thee. If they had stuff and beads, we would know it, and I would not hide it from thee. Appease thy wrath, Nyambe." It is impossible for anyone to enter into the mind of the African unless he understands how to him the world is full of spirits, for the most part suspicious and resentful—made in his own image. In bondage to the fear of these spirits he passes his days. The waterfalls and the royal tombs in a peculiar degree were sacred and terrible places. The traveller soon came to know the reverence paid to the tombs of departed kings. It was only with many forebodings in the heart of Coillard's crew that they left one of these tombs unhonoured. The Barotse before their campaigns would present their libations of milk and honey, and in the hour of victory they returned to the tomb to salute the king. To them he was not dead but living; and the missionaries found in this practice an introduction for their preaching of the Resurrection.

At Nalolo—the second capital—Coillard made the acquaintance of the queen at that town, Maibiba, an amiable and gracious woman. It was the custom in Barotseland for the sister or other blood relation

of the king to have an independent court at Nalolo, where she had a dignity only second to that of the king. "Ours is a land of blood," she said; "kings and chiefs succeed one another like shadows. They are never allowed to grow old." Of the rulers in that land this woman seemed the most worthy to be invested with supreme authority. But she too passed as shadows pass.

The country which the travellers had traversed had been one of rivers and deep solemn forests. They were coming now to the central valley of the Zambezi—"a district 150 miles long and 60 miles broad. It is the bed, most observers think, of the old lake of the Upper Zambezi, and presents to-day an utterly flat and treeless aspect."[1] The beauty which met the travellers on the lower reaches of the river seemed to be lost when they drew near to Lealui.

The climate no less than the landscape offered many swift alterations. Sometimes the thermometer sank to freezing-point at six o'clock in the morning, and afterwards a day followed of tropical heat. "We are at the beginning of the hot season," one traveller writes; "November is the hottest month of the year. At this time the thermometer, as it appears, registers as much as 118° Fahrenheit in the shade;"[2] but the nights are with an average temperature of 36°.

At the time with which this story deals, the land was rich in game animals; there were enormous herds of antelopes, some of which became an easy prey when the floods subsided and they were stranded

[1] Sir Harry Johnston in *Barotseland*, D. W. Stirke, p. 338.
[2] A. Bertrand, *The Kingdom of the Barotsi*.

on islands in the river; besides the antelopes and elands there were lions, zebras, monkeys, hippopotami, and many crocodiles. Among the birds there were to be found the ibis, heron, pelican, crane, and indeed most of the birds which are familiar in Southern Congoland, and Nyasaland.[1] But in forming a picture of life in Barotseland it is more important to know the hosts of insects which infested the country; warrior ants, small black ants, locusts, mosquitoes, tsetse flies, and of these, terrible as they all are, there are none more terrible than the warrior ants. It was not known then as it is known to-day how much insects are the carriers of disease and death. The fight for the health of the white man in the tropics has been chiefly a fight against insects and their lairs. It is a fight in which already many victories have been won, but it is not ended. In 1886 the fight had scarcely begun and the French Mission on the Zambezi had to pay its toll to these conquering legions.

From Nalolo to Lealui was but one day's journey. Lewanika's town was in ruins; nothing remained but miserable shelters half-buried in the luxuriant grass, for the jungle is always ready to steal over the unguarded place. There Coillard was received by Akufuna, the king. The Prime Minister addressed him with words of welcome, and implored him to be a father to the young king. Coillard preached upon *Peace*. It was a solemn and joyful moment when the chant of peace was heard in the capital of the Barotse. "Peace," said Natamoyo, the king's minister,

[1] Sir Harry Johnston in *Barotseland*, D. W. Stirke.

" people who bring peace, who would not receive them with open arms ? "

This expedition of Coillard's was one of survey chiefly. After a visit to Sefula the site of the mission was chosen. But it was seventeen days before the king would give consent to the formation of the mission and promise to carry the missionaries to Sefula when the rains were over. (From February to April there is a time of flood, which marks the end of the rainy season beginning in November.) The young king seemed absorbed in other matters; he was teachable and simple but clearly unfitted to wear a crown. The time of waiting for the king's decision made Coillard familiar with the customs of his new people. Their revels and wild dances at night-time kept him from sleep. His observations upon the character of the Barotse were marked by a gloom which was only saved from despair by his faith in the transforming power of the Gospel. He found everywhere blood-thirstiness and greed and thieving. The chiefs stole the ivory of their king, and the servants of the chiefs from them in turn. The rowers made him lose patience: " Our Massoutras are terrible people, liars, thieves, mockers and shameless. I am tired of them. May God pardon me! He is not tired of me." There was a deceptive calm in Barotseland. The young king was only a tool; the power behind the throne was Mathaha, blinded with ambition. Not far away lay the hidden exile, Lewanika, and a counter-revolution might come at any moment.

After two months' absence Coillard returned to Leshoma. It was a hospital; the fever had

spared none, and had almost worn out those who had remained behind. The winter of 1885 was spent at Leshoma, to which only disquieting echoes came across the Zambezi. The life was a dreary one. It was not as though they had arrived at their journey's end; it takes patience of no ordinary degree to endure such delays.

The population in the neighbourhood was composed of a few families of half-breed hunters. Bands of natives came trading, and in such ways there came opportunities, scanty but not neglected, of making known the Gospel. It was, moreover, a primitive life, in which the travellers had to live chiefly upon the resources of the country. They heard definitely at this time that their neighbours, the Jesuit fathers, were leaving the country. In Coillard's life there is no lack of a definite and unwavering conviction, but mingled with this was a large-hearted charity to others, not of his school. He had admired Colenso; he admired no less these Jesuit fathers, who were exceedingly kind to him.

> You would have been very much astonished to see me, a descendant of the Huguenots, holding serious converse with this disciple of Loyola on the experiences of the Christian life, the evangelization of the world, of Africa in particular, on the approaching Coming of our Saviour, on true conversion, and on the most effective way of treating the natives.

They differed on many points; and not least upon their attitude to the Africans. Coillard repudiated the use of force in dealing with the natives; he believed in moral suasion, and for this received the criticism both of Jesuits and traders. It was

counted by Coillard a remarkable fact that the Jesuits should retire, leaving a clear field to the French Protestants. For six years the Jesuits had been alone in Barotseland.

The season was advancing; but the Coillards were determined to cross the river. They left on August 14th, 1885, after a peculiarly solemn Sunday, when they partook for the first time in public of the Sacred Feast.

> Kazungula and the left bank of the Zambezi! One step further on our long pilgrimage. . . . It was an epoch in the evangelization of Africa, when we, with our wagons and our families, crossed the Zambezi—this barrier hitherto unsurmountable to strangers, above all to strangers who wished to settle north of the river. . . . The Gospel will not retreat. They may rob us, they may kill us, yet in a few years the messengers of salvation will become a great army, penetrating into the heart of the Black Continent.

Meanwhile rumours of a coalition against Akufuna were carried down the river. The young king had triumphed after a fierce battle, and the customary massacres of chiefs had followed. The chiefs of Sesheke were divided into two camps according as they sympathized with the young king or with Lewanika, and all attempts at a reconciliation were in vain. Still the mission station was a city of refuge within which there could be no bloodshed. The chiefs seemed in the day-time the most intimate friends, but as soon as darkness fell they fled from each other. It was a time of terror and bloodshed. Coillard and his party had to witness scenes which were branded on their memories: "The very first night after they had crossed the river, some fugitive women

rushed into the camp and implored Madame Coillard, who was alone for the moment, to save them, as the king's people had arrived to execute their men folk, and they expected to be killed too. As they had not even put their fence up, they had no shelter to offer the poor creatures, and before dawn they had been massacred." Human life was cheap on the Zambezi at all times, and most of all in time of revolution.

In November Élise was married to Jeanmairet at Sesheke with high festival. At the close of the day one of the artisans provided a surprise. The old men among the Barotse had told of Livingstone's wonderful fireworks; now they saw the thing for themselves. It was on that day that Coillard had news of Lewanika's final return to the throne. But there was no possibility of obeying Lewanika's repeated calls to the capital till March 1886. The interval was not wasted in Sesheke, where the first station in Barotseland was now definitely established. The chiefs and their slaves were not responsive. Coillard would ring the bell for worship; they would come and listen and forget, and sometimes the chiefs would interrupt and say, "Where is the coffee? We are hungry; give us food." It was difficult to awaken such minds. But when Coillard left again for Lealui, Christina and the Jeanmairets had the beginnings of a mission-station to guard.

Another queen, Mokwae, was enthroned at Nalolo. She was not a stranger; Coillard had seen her last as a prisoner of Mathaha. When she saw Coillard she laughed aloud and cried, "Mathaha! Mathaha! We have slain him and all his!" Then

she told the story of her escape and the victory of Lewanika. She was not less bloodthirsty than the rest. Once she cut off with her own hand the head of a man who had offended her, and sent round the public crier to announce, "The queen informs you that she has pulled a troublesome thorn out of her foot." She was very civil to the missionary, and invited him to play her a tune on a cracked accordion which she had. He played some familiar airs. Memories of childhood, sacred memories, surged within him; he was in Asnières again, in the cottage with the wandering evangelists. He gave back the instrument to the Mokwae. She too could play, but it was a terrible discord; and to that she sang. For half an hour Coillard had to listen to this strange serenade. Mokwae made remarks, according to the custom of the country, upon the appearance of the moruti. "He has fine eyes; he looks people in the face; his eyes smile. He is not like So-and-so who has cat's eyes!"

Lewanika at this time was about thirty-five, strong, well-built, intelligent, with prominent eyes, and pendulous lower lip. His clothing consisted of the skins of small wild animals, attached in bundles round his loins. "I greet thee, my missionary, my father," he said when he first met Coillard. The boatmen saluted him and poured forth the usual stream of laudatory words. The king paid no heed but welcomed Coillard, and after sharing a roast goose with him invited him to continue his procession. "We then formed a procession of boats which, to the loud beating of drums and kettle-drums, advanced to Lealui."

But before the town was reached Lewanika had turned aside to worship at the tombs of departed kings. It was on March 22nd, 1886, that Coillard reached the capital. There he had many talks with the king, whom he found amiable and talkative, but not ready to suffer any opposition. So began the long and desperate fight which Coillard waged for the soul of this man, with which this narrative will deal at greater length in a later chapter.

At Sesheke, on his return to prepare for the last journey with the wagons, Coillard found many evidences of the reign of terror. Lewanika was bent on exterminating his foes.[1] His envoys tried to hide the facts, but the vultures told their tale. Yet lest it should be supposed that such savages were difficult in daily intercourse, Coillard hastens to say that they were the most polished people in the world, out-doing even the Parisians. They stole; they killed; they lied; but their manners were charming.

The third journey to Lealui was the most perilous of all. Leaving Christina with the Jeanmairets at Sesheke, Coillard and his party set out with their vans on August 17th, 1886; but the wagon which had served them so well showed signs of collapse.

> The naves are completely rotten [wrote Coillard]; you can plunge a knife-blade into them like cork; the spokes work up and down like pistons. There are few which have rolled so far—few which have given so much satisfaction to their travellers. Ten years' service in a country without roads, among woods and rocks and burning sand, without ever being sheltered from the

[1] Upon this Coillard is quite definite, but Mr Stirke writes, "Lewanika showed great clemency, and pardoned most of the rebels."—D. W. Stirke, *Barotseland*.

wind, the rain, and the rays of a tropical sun is much—very much. How shall we replace our good old wagon, our home of so many years in the desert?

But with some patching, though lame, it continued on its way. They were a week before they had made fifty miles. The tale of hardships on this journey would take too long to tell. They had many foes, none more deadly than the tsetse fly. Difficulties, too, came from the character of the natives. These were familiar with the river and with fishing, but other kinds of work they hated; they feared moreover the oxen, and abhorred the wagons and night journeys.

In the midst of his daily cares Coillard had forgotten that an eclipse was due. The boys cried aloud when they saw it, "Yo! we are all dead men." He had missed the chance beforehand, but after the event he "improved" it to some purpose, and the day ended better than it began. One Sunday he was carried back in meditation to Leribé, and to Asnières. Then his thoughts rising to a higher plane, he saw all the countries of the world where the Good News resounded:

> I seem to hear it mounting towards the sky from populous cities and deserts, from towns and hamlets, from continents and isles lost in the sea, a universal symphony of praise, wherein the diversities of the human tongues are harmoniously blended. Then I take courage and leap for joy.

It was the vision of the poet who sang *The Song of Honour*:

> *I heard the universal choir,*
> *The Sons of Light exalt their Sire*
> *With universal song,*

Earth's lowliest and loudest notes,
Her million and ten million throats
Exalt Him loud and long,
And lips and lungs and tongues of Grace
From every part and every place
Within the shining of His face,
The universal throng.[1]

By such visions alone could the courage be fed in the long delays within the forest. Sometimes provisions came near to an end. Sometimes the oxen were exhausted. They had to choose at one point the best oxen of two wagons and leave the other two to be fetched later. But even in this journey Coillard could discern the rich character of the soil, and everywhere he had an eye for strategic positions by means of which he could link together Sesheke and Lealui.

It was October 11th when they reached the site at Sefula, which they had chosen two years before. There they unloaded. Night fell. But darkness deeper than night fell upon Coillard; he retreated to his wagon. In the night the cries of fowls reached them. Waddell went out, and staring into the darkness saw a beast; fired, and discovered that he had killed a leopard.

So after taking two months for a hundred and fifty leagues they had ceased wheeling. The tossing wandering life had not been their choice. They longed rather for a few years' halt and a home. They had come to the site, but it was not like their old home. On the west they looked over a few dried stumps and mutilated trees, and then over the vast bare expanse called the Valley. In the sandy plateau, where the wagon halted, was

[1] Ralph Hodgson.

to be their new abiding-place. They found famine to greet them as well as the leopard.

Soon they got to work. Waddell and his companion went to their sawing; Coillard to his buying and bargaining and to any work at which a hand was needed. The king too was most agreeable; his palace, the work of the half-civilized negroes, was his pride and the pride of his people. "The house is yours, my father," he said in his courtly way. It was composed of three apartments, sixteen or seventeen feet square, daubed and plastered by hand. The whole building was of stakes and reeds, and without a single nail, for there was no nail in the country.

It still remained to fetch Christina from Sesheke, so despatching the wagons by road Coillard went by canoe. Christina and François made their journey together in the wagon — a delightful experience. She had a horror of rivers; and would rather run the risk of a most perilous journey by road than dare the river. It was a new wedding journey for them; they adorned their wandering abode every day with fresh bouquets of flowers. Before them now was the hope of finding at last a home. It was 1887 and for ten years they had been without any settled abode. Now they were, as they loved to think, on their way homewards. When they arrived at Sefula they found the harvest gathered and the famine over.

With his escort of musicians and clowns Lewanika came to greet Christina; gloomy in private he was chatty and gay in public. Not Lewanika only, but crowds of people surrounded them. They could find little rest, but they were happy.

Each morning we say on waking: And we are at Sefula! If it rains we get into the shade and repeat with thankfulness—We are at Sefula.

From January 1887 the Barotse Mission dates its foundation; and here ends another period in the lives of Christina and François. The history of these ten years was utterly unexpected. A few months' wandering and then a new station, had been their forecast. Some lives are arranged it would appear in an orderly sequence. The man has his programme, and punctually hour by hour it is fulfilled. In other lives it looks as though some Hand were improvising with them as they are needed. They are never allowed to know beforehand what the way will be. They sail with sealed orders for the next stage; and when the seal is broken it always shows something new. There is no forecast ever fulfilled for such as they; there is no hope ever perfectly consummated. They sow in tears, and it is left to others to reap in joy. But by their lives they plainly declare that they seek a City, and they will not return whence they came forth, and God is not ashamed to be called their God.

CHAPTER XI

THE MISSIONARY AS PROPHET

> But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here besides a prophet of the Lord, that we might enquire of him And the King of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the Lord, Micaiah the son of Imlah ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.
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> 1 *Kings* xxii. 7-8.

THE missionary on his first approach to a primitive people has to play many parts: he is teacher, evangelist, maker of a new literature, craftsman; he is the herald of the Gospel, but he finds himself back in the Old Testament scene; he is a prophet as the New Testament uses the word, but no less is he a prophet as Micaiah and Amos were prophets in Israel. He pleads with individual souls, but he must also declare the Divine Will to a nation. He must be at once a Micaiah, a John the Baptist, and a Christian apostle; and nothing is more manifest in the annals of Christian missions than the courage and insight which these modern prophets have displayed.

There were differences between the Lewanika of Barotseland in 1887, and Jehoshaphat, King of Judah; but the glow which rests upon the sacred history may hide from us the resemblances between the Israelite king and the African chief. It was

a small tribe or group of tribes under an autocratic rule in which such prophets as Nathan or Micaiah lived. There the voice of the prophet could always reach the king; there too, although the prophet could appeal to a religious faith accepted by the king, he had always to dread the allurements of cults, in which the very earth of Canaan seemed to be steeped. In that land of Israel also human life was held of small account, and rulers with their chiefs went forth to battle when their stores were low. There is something in common between Lewanika and the kings of the lines of Rehoboam and of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

The modern prophet in pagan lands lives as a rule in a compact tribe, and has constant access to the court; he has to watch his people going out to the wars; he may warn them but he cannot control; he has to take his place in the court along with a formidable array of other prophets, witch-doctors, necromancers, sorcerers; he is dealing with a tribe which is a unity, with one destiny and one head. The tribe in peace and in war is one. It may perish or go into slavery, with not a soul spared. It is within an earlier world that the missionary finds himself—in a world in which the value of the individual life has not been discovered. Within that world he may find his kinship not only with apostles or evangelists, but also with those men through whom the word of the Lord came to Israel.

There is another office which the modern prophet shares with the prophets of the eighth and following centuries before Christ—with Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. He can see the life of his people in

its true perspective. He hears from afar the cries of the western nations, drawing nearer with the march of a destiny by which his people if they resist will be broken in pieces. As Isaiah heard the tramp of the Assyrian army in which there were none that slumbered and none that slept, so the modern prophet can hear the distant murmur of another host, whose advance-guard are the travellers and merchant-adventurers, after whom the tide of western life comes apace. He knows what is moving behind these traders and sportsmen. But his tribe knows it not; and it falls to him in the brief interval before the tribe is engulfed to open the eyes of his people that they may learn the secret of a nation's life, and to say of a certain way of life, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

The years between the arrival of Coillard and Christina at Sefula in 1887, and the incorporation of Barotseland within the Chartered Company in June 1890, were years rich in all the interests which are found in the early days of a new mission. There was building to be done, a school to be founded, outpost work among the villages to be planned. They were years of severe toil. Sefula was not Leribé; their outlook upon the wide waste plain was not like the outlook upon the grey rocks and rushing streams of Basutoland. But they had a home at last; after years in the wagon and in the tent, it was a joy to have some abiding-place.

In that first period of the Central African Mission, however, it is not so much the missionary builder or writer or teacher that stands out, but the pro-

phet. This was no new rôle for Coillard; in the presence of Molapo he had spoken in the style of the authentic prophet, "Thus saith the Lord!" Now in the country of Lewanika there came many a call to him to give his counsel to his people. He was concerned for souls, he could never cease to care for them: but he could not forget that his was the one voice to speak of peace and mercy to a tribe plotting its raids or carrying out its campaigns. He had to utter words to a people set in one definite situation, and faced by alternatives, one of which might bring peace, and the other famine and desolation on the land. The missionary had to play the prophet.

Sefula was only a day's journey from the capital; and before Coillard and his party were allowed to settle they had to attend the khotla at the king's invitation. There the character of the mission was freely discussed. Nowhere can there be found more vivid and convincing records of such assemblies than Coillard gives.[1]

There are certain things common to the khotla among all Bantu peoples. The place of meeting in Lealui was a large enclosure with a stockade round it. On one side of the public place was a circular enclosure, the king's harem. The huts of his wives were ranged round the inner wall and separated by reed courts. In the middle was a fine roomy hut surrounded by a court, which was the king's private room. Nobody had the right to approach it except his ministers, and they might only enter with his express permission. It was not in that inner place that the council of the

[1] In his book, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, cf. p. 279.

tribe met, but in the large outer court. "At seven in the morning, and three in the afternoon, the king followed by the drums, the *serimbas*, and sometimes by his ministers, goes in procession to the place where he sits in the shade. He is generally clothed in a long red cotton shirt, with large designs, coming down to his heels, and the cap of striped cotton so dear to the Barotse."[1] As soon as the drums were heard, all the men flocked to the khotla, where they arranged themselves according to their rank. Those who were from a distance came in single file, and kneeling down offered to the king an otter skin, a shell called *mande*, or a simple bead necklace. No one could come empty-handed. There cases were brought before the king; debates were held, and decrees issued. In this court, at once a high court of justice and a parliament, the king was supreme. He could summon whom he would and his word was final; and yet as in all such autocracies, the chief was strangely under the fear of his head-men. There had been revolutions before; and no king who has been in exile can ever sleep securely.

The Gambella, the prime minister, was vague, but sinister:

"Barotse, you see the baruti [plural of moruti] before you; you have heard them. If you do not wish for them, fear not to say so, and they will return to their own home. Speak freely; now is your opportunity. Do not say that the king imposes on you a thing you dislike. Speak!" There was silence for some time. Then a speaker arose, indignant that any doubt should be cast

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 220 (English edition).

upon their friendliness to the baruti. The king had sent for them. Was not that enough? Were the Barotse to stay in a dark hole. Others followed in the same strain. But one little man, pitted with the smallpox, cried out, "What, you speak like this, Barotse; what cowards and liars you are!" To this man the baruti were a curse; they had darkened the sun, and brought the drought; they should be sent back. The one who followed dwelt upon the blessings which had been received from the foreigners: the Scriptures, wisdom, peace, prosperity; and moreover they had a mine of stuff and of wagons. But how could they draw these since the oxen were dead, and the moruti did not like them to raid their neighbours! Another speaker endorsed this; "learning is a thing that is only fit for women and children, cattle is the business of men and of the khotla. So let us leave Litia [Lewanika's heir] and the boys of his age with the moruti, and as for ourselves let us go and get cattle: our families are starving."

Then spoke Liomba, who had been in Khama's country. There he had seen the moruti held in honour. Every day the great chief Khama was stitching furs. "It is for my missionary and friend," he had said; "M. Coillard, who has gone to the Zambezi." Things were very different, said Liomba, in Khama's land. They dressed like Europeans, and their marriage festivals were different. "But just wait," he added, "when our son Litia takes a wife, it shall be a great national festival. . . . The baruti will have all sorts of good things promised them, and will give them

fatherly counsels." So Liomba gave his vote that the baruti should be received as benefactors.

In all there were twenty orators in three hours; but the level of public speech struck Coillard as far below that of Basutoland; the government, such as it was, appeared to be despotic but feeble. The land needed a strong and benevolent government, but nothing was less desired by the missionary than a hasty revolution. Coillard had no doctrinaire ideas upon methods of government; in such matters, like a good Frenchman, he was a fearless realist. The one thing that mattered for the moment was the freedom to prepare this people through the gift of the Gospel for the new age which was very near. But there was no benevolent autocracy. Lewanika could be violent; at this stage of his life he was a weak tyrant; he was suspicious of rivals; and he stopped at no cruelty which would confirm his rule.

During this first visit to Lealui since the establishment of the mission, Coillard had clear evidence that he lived among a people over whom sorcery and witchcraft had their sinister power. These were the recognized methods of calling the unseen forces into the local scene. It was as if the missionary were back again in the ages when our fathers practised "the judgment of God." Things of which he had read as far-off tales now became a part of his own life.

Could I believe in those hard old times,
Here in this safe luxurious age?
Were the horrors invented to season rhymes?
Or truly is man so fierce in his rage?

Like many another man, Coillard had to learn that it is not in the racial memory alone that the old customs live.

On the day that he departed from Lealui to return to his station it was announced that a chamberlain had died. The court kept the secret till the missionary had departed. At once there was an outcry of witchcraft. "Death from natural causes" was a verdict not admitted in Barotseland. Moeyanyana, a pleasant intelligent fellow still young, and beloved by the king, was designated as the criminal. A pot was put on the fire, and one of the slaves of the accused by proxy plunged his hand into the boiling water. The effects were evident at once. How Moeyanyana was bound with cords to posts, exposed to fire and poison, tortured, and at last murdered, can be read in Coillard's letters. It was a revelation to him of the dark powers at work, mightier than the king himself. Lewanika tried to save this life, but the custom of the land was too strong for him. There was always a power behind the throne, the hidden hand of pagan custom.

One other way of approach to the king was opened when the young princes came to the school at Sefula. Each came with his own attendant; and the problems raised by this practice in a pagan land can be easily imagined. In such a land there is, for example, a familiarity with sexual vice from very early days; to those who reach adolescence there is offered no ideal of self-control, but a life of indulgence, always however within the limits of custom. The habits of the Barotse and other tribes can be studied in detail in such scientific

treatises as that upon *The Ba-ila People.*[1] It was a difficult charge to keep when Lewanika sent his princes with their retinue to Sefula. These youths believed that everything was permitted to them; like all their countrymen they turned every subject to ridicule; and they often showed the "yellow heart," the Barotse word for covetousness. It was distressing for Coillard to discover that his aneroid barometers had been stolen to make snuff boxes. Coillard was the most generous of men, but he had to warn his friends that the natives of Central Africa were not the "sweet simple confiding creatures" of whom much was said in Europe. On the contrary at this stage they had "not the slightest desire to hear and still less to receive, the Gospel." If the chiefs called Christian missionaries into their land, it was generally for political or personal interests. "We cannot expect to be received with enthusiasm or triumph; all that we ask or have a right to ask, is toleration." It was in this spirit that Coillard began his school. From the first he longed for an industrial school. The Barotse are gifted in handiwork, and the king himself was an excellent carpenter. Through the crafts there lay an open road into the heart of this tribe. But the missionary society was poor, and its civilizing side had to be neglected.

While the school was beginning, and other plans were shaping themselves, it had not been well with the people. Economic necessity was pressing upon them. The king's hunt had failed; the floods were low, and therefore on the temporary

[1] Rhodes and Smith.

islands there were fewer antelopes cut off by the waters from escape; and this meant the threat of famine. During the revolution there had been a wholesale butchery of cattle; and to a legacy of impending famine Lewanika had returned. There was only one way out of their distress; and soon the ancient cry grew louder, "To the Mashulumboe!" These were their weaker neighbours, whose cattle they and their fathers had often raided, and once more the Barotse looked covetously to a raid upon them. When the favourable time between January and June came, in 1888, there was much talk of the war; Lewanika was inclined to give the signal, because in this way he might win popular favour. At the entreaty of the king Coillard went with M. Goy, who had joined the mission in August 1887, to the Council of the Chiefs, met to decide the issue.

The town was full of people; bivouac fires were burning along the valley. There were many signs of preparations for war. Lewanika laughed with pleasure when the missionaries arrived, and began to justify the expedition. These Mashulumboe had ill-treated a European traveller, Dr Holub; and Lewanika thought it his duty to chastise them. But like others who are justifying an action, he was not content with this claim to be a judge exacting a penalty, and added, "They are not human beings, quite naked, and then. . . ." Here he paused: and afterwards added, "and then we have no more cattle and it is our last expedition. On our return we will give ourselves up entirely to your teaching, and we will all become believers, *all*."

Fresh crowds of armed men were arriving; they were massed in the public square, draped in flaming colours, decked out in ostrich feathers, in rags and fripperies of European clothing, in leopard skins, in every kind of wild beast's hide which gave a man the semblance of an animal. There was no lack of firearms. It was a strange congregation to which Coillard preached on the Sunday morning. Some European garments were to be found, such as traders had gladly exchanged for ivory. They were ready-made; and little had been done to make the garment fit the man. One had garments too vast, another too small. "One stout individual was rigged out in a waistcoat only."[1] It is given to few preachers to have an assembly before him with such varieties of garments; Europe had disposed not only of its firearms but of its cast-off clothing to the Africans. Civilization conducts a ceaseless rummage sale among primitive peoples.

The Queen Mokwae arrived for the service, and the wives of Lewanika. After they had taken their seats on the mats, the service began. The text was—"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light." On the next day Lewanika desired Coillard to attend at the Council. The members were divided, but the greater number were for war. Coillard himself spoke home truths to the Council; and for this reason, and perhaps because the omens were unfavourable, the decision of Lewanika in the end was against the raid. Coillard went home, but two days afterwards

[1] *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, p. 313.

he heard that the king was making ready for war.

The war-drums throbbed through the night. The king visited the sacred tomb of Katonga, and on this journey he drew near to Sefula, where Coillard set out to meet him. With the army was the prophetess always ahead of the vanguard! She had a power like that of the dervish to work the warriors into a state of frenzy. She carried the horn containing the war-medicines and nothing could be done without her. "What a rabble! It would roll on like a snowball, thieving, pillaging without control. Terror goes before them, destruction accompanies them, and desolation follows them." There was nothing to be done but to warn the king and to preach judgment to him, as Coillard and Aaron, the Basuto evangelist, did faithfully. The prophet could only stand before the king and bid him remember the law of God which he was setting at defiance. The king was not at ease: "I am driven to it—driven to it!" he cried.

The school at which the young princes and their slaves attended was broken up. The hopes which the missionaries had dared to cherish were rudely taken from them. But faith, Coillard knew, was always a fight; and when courage was no more than a burning flax, he recalled again that "the politeness of a soldier is obedience."

The army came back after five months, a time in which the land was as the land of Israel in the time of the judges: "there was no king, and each man did that which was lawful in his own eyes." Mokwae led the victorious host with troops of women singing the praises of the king, while the

men acclaimed the queen. At the king's command the crier proclaimed an assembly. The prophet-missionary preached from the words, "God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." In plain language he denounced the expedition as mere brigandage. Lewanika had a present of oxen ready for the missionaries, but he was left in no doubt what was their mind, and the present was not given. The king and his tribe had plundered; they had captured young women and children; their hands were red with blood; like a Hebrew prophet Coillard spoke for the oppressed.

There were strange contradictions in the mind of the king. During the expedition he had scrupulously observed the Lord's Day. There were two poor renegades, who had deserted the mission and returned to paganism. Lewanika made them his baruti; they had to pray, sing hymns, and preach. To make them more worthy of their office he kept them from intoxicating drinks. Their position was an anomalous one: to be expected to preach a doctrine to which they gave the lie in their lives; to be compelled by a tyrant to a course which could only bring them bitter reproaches from their conscience; to be kept sober in order to preach a Faith which they had denied—there is a spiritual tragedy. But it is a clue to Coillard's mind that he did not despair; it might happen that not for the first time preachers would be converted by their own message.

A prophet can never be interpreted as though all his days were given to the declaration of the Divine Law before kings and rulers. There were

many interests in Coillard's life, and many anxieties. The little band of workers grew less. The doctor who had joined them, M. Dardier, died; X left; Levi the evangelist could stand the strain no longer; and when the royal family designated Aaron's daughter for Litia, the king's son, Aaron went home to Basutoland. "Who is to do the work?" Coillard cried in his despatches. At home too there was a patriotic outcry in favour of concentration upon the French colonies. The Protestants of France were eager to show that they were not lacking in loyalty to their country. Why then support a mission on the Zambezi? But Coillard pleaded for it as a pledge of the essentially catholic character of heartfelt Christianity. Above all the barriers of nations, they had set up the Cross.

Sometimes a traveller came to the mission. There is a freemasonry among travellers in the wilds; and the Coillards were glad to have with them Mr F. C. Selous, mightiest of sportsmen, fresh from one of his countless escapes from death. Coillard to visitors such as Selous showed himself a charming and gracious host. When the Barotse saw a white man such as Selous draw near, they wondered if he were a lost white, a man without a country, and therefore to be pillaged with impunity. By all the great travellers in Africa, the mission house is remembered as a pleasant haven —as a sanctuary where a table is spread before them in the presence of their enemies.

But the tide of white immigration was drawing nearer to the Zambezi. The missionary was only a short time ahead of the others. It was well

that he arrived first, and could offer the good gifts which are in the hands of the whites, before the mixed tide of good and evil came over the valley. In 1888 Coillard was present at an important Council of the nation. It was the dry season and Lealui was in the grip of famine. The Gambella made the speech from the throne, in which it was suggested that the country should put itself under the Protectorate of "Satory," the native name for Queen Victoria of England. Many times had Lewanika besought Coillard to write on his behalf to the authorities; but in vain. Lewanika however had not given up the idea of becoming like his friend Khama; and thinking he would have the support of the mission he sprang the proposal as a surprise. In the debate which followed in the khotla, the critical question was whether the Barotse were willing to have not only missionaries but soldiers in their country. What did these *masole* (soldiers) bring? They knew what the missionary brought; he loves them, prays for them, gives them sleep and rain; but what are these *masole*? Everything really depended upon Coillard, to whom all eyes turned. It was one of those moments which, if some critics of missions are in the right, the missionary would eagerly welcome; for is it not well understood that he is the advance agent of commerce, and the pioneer of empire?

Lewanika was waiting stamping with impatience. Coillard explained that as servants of God the missionaries had absolutely nothing to do either with the *masole*, or the British government, or any government whatever. This he made them understand. He showed them what a protectorate

meant and what liabilities it brought; and he offered to help them with his advice: nothing more.

The chiefs understood. They came to the decision that they welcomed the missionaries, and hoped the nation, worn out as it was with feuds, would listen to their teaching. They needed *teachers*, not soldiers. Lewanika was enraged and declared that the reason why he wanted the protection of Satory was because of the plots against his life. On the next day there was a terrible scene when the supposed enemies of the king were exposed to charges of treachery. There was always a scapegoat in such times; it was Liomba, a minister, who was denounced this time, and though at first his friends took his part, they cowered before the tempest that broke out. "Liomba was forced to leave his place in the shade, and stripped of his garments, and bareheaded, to crouch down in the midst of the pitso, quite alone, amid the hooting of the crowd, on the burning sand." There was a cry that he should be bound with cords and slain. The minister of mercy, the protector of accused persons, would not intervene. The man was lost. Then Coillard rose:

"Barotse," he said, "a servant of God is a Natamoyo, a minister of mercy. You shall not kill that man; you may kill me first. You have insulted him enough. What is his crime? Say! Is he the author of your plots, or the inventor of the reports that have filled the country, and reach us by letters and messengers from Sesheke, from Pata-matenga, from Lake Ngami, from Libebe's, and from everywhere else?" [1]

[1] François Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, p. 332.

Little by little the storm died down. Liomba was fined; he made the necessary atonement, and then—once more his relatives and friends crowded round him with rejoicing. This was not the only time Coillard had shown that the missionary took the other side; he was the real advocate of the prisoner and the friendless.

Throughout this time the missionaries had to face many misunderstandings. Rumour is not less a lying jade in Africa than in Europe. The purposes and the methods of Coillard were interpreted into the values of the Barotse. Such rumours had their effect in 1889, when the Mokwae withdrew her children from the school, more than thirty children being called back to Nalolo. The ostensible reason was that she was ill, very ill, and that she wished to see them before she died. But the bones had been consulted, and the diviners had prophesied no good of the missionary. It came out that there was a party at the court loudly demanding the expulsion of the missionaries. Lewanika was not a friend to choose in a hard battle; he had an eye for a way of retreat. Coillard determined to visit the Mokwae herself. Before he and Litia, who went with him, could reach the royal presence, they had to have water poured over their feet, and burning embers spread before them. This could be trusted to cast out any devils there might be in them.

The Mokwae, the Prince Consort, and the Court, had stony faces. Coillard, who like most missionaries had become skilled in drugs, administered pills, and made cocoa for her majesty; she had a good night, and was full of gratitude for the pills.

Tongues were loosened, and all the grievances against the prophet were revealed. He had made the Barotse children, so they said, do the work of slaves (they had gathered sand for the chapel floor); he had offended the chiefs on his tours by gathering the people together *without force;* in his teaching he had led them to sing "Molimo mong a lefatse" (God the Master of the world). Now *world* and *country* were the same word. Did the country then no longer belong to the Barotse? He had predicted all manner of calamities; he had promised the Barotse that if they believed the Gospel they would live eternally, and they died more than ever!

The visit was not in vain; certain of the rumours were laid; and the school began to grow again.

But before long the prophet had to deal with a situation in the political life of his adopted tribe, which was to affect for good or ill all the future life of the mission as well as the nation.

In June 1889 a Mr Ware induced the Barotse to make a concession on behalf of a mining company seeking gold. Other promoters were eagerly waiting for similar openings. They were waves of the European invasion. After the pitso which had ended in confusion the king still persisted in asking Coillard [1] to write to the Administrator of British Bechuanaland. Cecil Rhodes saw the greatness of the opportunity and in response to Coillard's letter sent Mr Lochner, the agent of the British South Africa Company, to Sefula. Mr Lochner arrived in April 1890 ill and tired; and it was

[1] Mackintosh, p. 383.

a plain duty for Coillard to entertain him. Coillard's part was simply that of an intermediary. In a letter to Cecil Rhodes he says :[1]

> You enquire of me if I can accept the Residency. Well, I cannot serve two masters. But if without any official title I can be to your Company of any service as a medium of communication, and until you get the proper man, I willingly place myself at your disposal.

Such a letter makes Coillard's attitude plain; it shows moreover what impression the man's life had left upon the shrewd mind of Rhodes, who was not the man to offer important positions to men without the authority and the gifts needful. There is some danger that Coillard may appear to the casual student of his life a quietist with a gift for introspection, a mystic with a life of inward detachment, akin to the Vaughan whom he loved; it is useful to correct this judgment by the fact that Rhodes offered him the Residency in the early days of a new occupation.

The fact that Mr Lochner found with the Coillards the shelter that all other travellers found was enough, in a land where suspicion is always a habit of mind, to kindle it into flame in a time of tension. It was rumoured that the missionary was intriguing with the enemies of the country. The Council which met to decide upon the question of a treaty with the British South Africa Company lasted five days. Coillard protested his own disinterestedness and begged the chiefs to put to him any questions on which they needed answers. Finally

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 383.

in June 1890 the treaty was signed by Lewanika, who thus placed his country under the suzerainty of the Company, under which it remains to this day. The treaty provided a defence for the tribe against other peoples; and promised to preserve the rights of the king and the chiefs. The mining rights were conceded to the Company, but four per cent annually of the total output was reserved for the king and his heirs. Coillard had done nothing to hasten this step. But realizing that it was impossible for the tribe to resist the invading hosts of emigrants, he thought the treaty provided the one means of safety. "To-day," he wrote, "they knock at the door and ask for a treaty: to-morrow they would have broken it down and invaded the country as masters."

The treaty forced upon the mission an adaptation to a new range of demands. Some of the former offices of the missionary became sinecures. It was possible afterwards to lay aside some of the prophet's duties, and to give his time to the building of the Church, and to the cure of souls. There is no foreign politics for a tribe within the compass of the Chartered Company. But there is no lack of opportunity for the wise counsellor. There is room still for the Natamoyo, the minister of mercy.

Coillard was charged with partiality for the agents of the British Company. He could bear this more readily from the natives; it wounded him deeply when it was made by X, who had been a friend and fellow-worker. But this was not the only trouble which the period of transition gave to the Coillards. Lewanika was incensed when

he learned that to be under the Chartered Company was not the same thing as to be under the protectorate of the British Crown. Coillard was accused of having sold the country. About this time a little band of pioneers from the Primitive Methodist Mission arrived in Barotseland hoping for permission to work among the vassal tribe of Mashulumboe. It was self-evident to the people that this was part of the British plot; and the new missionaries suffered much indignity. The French Mission by seeking to shield them fell into the same disgrace. In this way the signing of the treaty proved an occasion of much disturbance. In the end it proved to be for the advancement of the mission; but at the time it seemed to let loose upon Coillard and his friends forces which threatened to make an end of the work.

In May 1891 there was a crisis.[1] Coillard was summoned to the capital; he hardly expected to return alive. But as it happened the interview which took place between Lewanika, X and himself ended in the vindication of the mission. Coillard was able to reveal the misrepresentations which his former colleague had spread abroad. X had made out that the king had sacrificed all his rights to the Company, and had no place any longer in his own land. All such interpretations of the treaty Coillard was able to expose; but the session lasted from 9 a.m. till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. On the following day, being Sunday, Coillard preached on the words, "We are ambassadors for Christ"; spoke of the inviolability of the ambassador; and protested against the ill-treatment

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

which the Primitive Methodist missionaries had suffered. On Monday the discussion with the king was renewed and Coillard did not reach home till 7 p.m.

"Is it all right?" Christina cried out.

"Yes, it is all right," he answered; and yet as it proved it was not right. Lewanika did not give up his suspicions for some time; and X, recalled by his employer, left nothing undone to increase the feeling against his former friends.

The time had come for Coillard to meet a sorrow which had often threatened him and now had to be endured. Christina was very ill; in her delirium she cried out, "My darling, they are slandering you!" But she lived long enough to see the worst over. Two weeks before her death Litia came from Khama with a serious remonstrance to Lewanika. Two days later Litia professed his Christian faith; and not many days after a message was received from Queen Victoria recognizing Lewanika's treaty with the Company, and assuring him of an honourable protectorate.

The same word came to Coillard now that came to another of the prophets: "Son of Man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died." Christina had been failing in health; but till the end she was the same faithful helper, true to her vow that always the work of Christ should be first. "For her all is peace, but for me what a terrible solitude! Keep Thou near me!" Christina had always been fearful of rivers; she never overcame her horror, and would rather face the perils of a pathless

forest in a wagon than the terrors of the river. But she passed the last of rivers in peace; and she

At rocky bed and current deep
Shall never more grow pale.

François remained. But the memory of her must not hinder him. He was left wounded in spirit and lonely, but faithful to their trust.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOUL OF LEWANIKA

Christian and Obstinate pull for Pliable's soul.
Bunyan's Note.

And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house. *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

I'll go to judgment in the evening of the day,
And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day
When I lay this body down.
Negro Song.

THE age of an African of a past generation must always be uncertain, but there is reason to believe that Lewanika [1] was born about 1844. Somewhere about the same time the Basuto warrior Sebitoane, after trekking across the Zambezi, founded the Makololo Empire. The Barotse were conquered and held in slavery, learning to speak the language of their conquerors. Lewanika as a child belonged to a people held down in cruel bondage. He entered upon his conscious life a slave amid a tribe of slaves, and the Makololo were warriors with all the ruthless methods of a primitive people.

The life of an African boy follows an accepted

[1] Robosi was his other name; but he will be called Lewanika throughout lest the reader should experience the perplexity familiar to students of Russian fiction in which every character has three or more names.

ritual; when adolescence begins he is initiated into the rights and duties of his tribe; he is instructed according to ancient custom in the physical side of his being, and too often is encouraged to begin a life of sexual licence. Lewanika in common with other boys in his early manhood would enter into a world with a character of its own, with customs not to be questioned, with a tradition handed down by the ages. It was a world not without religion. The Barotse had their great spirit Nyambe to fear and to propitiate; but Nyambe was but a reflexion of their own character upon the screen of the unknown, and not of the best in their character; for there, as in other lands, the worshippers attained on occasions to virtues denied to their gods. Other spirits were about him, spirits of the waterfalls and the rivers, spirits haunting the forest and living in its inhabitants, in creeping things and flying fowls. It was a world steeped in fears upon which Lewanika looked; and so far as man had his hand in it, a world of blood. There was no escape; all that could be done was to appease the Terrors, and to laugh and to forget; through sensual pleasures, or through the hunt, or the wild dance and debauch there was respite to be had.

It is sometimes thought that missionaries have too keen a scent for the vileness of pagan social life; they are accused of blindness to the goodness of their people. But if a student of Barotseland wishes to have the dark facts stated without prejudice in purely scientific terms he will not turn to Coillard, but to books like *Barotseland: Eight Years among the Barotse*, by the late Native Com-

missioner in Northern Rhodesia. The scientific student knows the facts of the sexual life among such a tribe, knows how the licence and the absence of any chastity cast their shadow over its physical and intellectual life. The time is surely past for the conspiracy to ignore the fiercest enemy which the Gospel has to fight. Coillard called it the Slough (*bourbier*), and its presence haunted him though he said little of it; he is not the witness to be called if the reign of lust is to be described. With the "Slough" Lewanika was familiar from childhood. There was no escape.

At the same time it would not be just to ignore the other side of this pagan life—the joys of human affections; the delight of men fighting with danger; and even the momentary awe when the soul was in the presence of the wild beauty in river and forest and sky. There were festivals of the new moon, and of the changing seasons, and such days have a charm in Africa as in other lands for the awakening mind. But for the child and the boy Lewanika there must have been more of terror than of joy.

When Lewanika was twenty-two his people rose against their conquerors and won their freedom. The Makololo who had taken the sword perished by the sword. It was the hazard they understood. They would not have quarrelled with their fate; and their afore-time slaves bore no malice against their oppressors. They killed them, but they did not hate them. They indeed still retained the language of the Makololo, and honoured the names of their great oppressors, and the few survivors were treated as aristocrats.

Sepopa the father of Lewanika was called to be chief of the liberated tribe. If he had been chosen for his supremacy over others in cruelty he would have justified his place. It was his humour to feed the crocodiles with little children! In the end somewhere about 1877 he perished, as he had made others perish. His people driven desperate by his cruelty sent him to die of hunger on the banks of the Zambezi. At first his nephew was chosen to succeed him, but after a few months Lewanika was called to the throne which, with a brief interval of banishment, he filled till 1916.

Without question he deserved to be held in honour for his long reign; he proved himself an astute statesman, and a reformer who had many right and even noble impulses. But here we have to do, so far as we can trace its course, with a battle for the soul of this man. There is no fight so thrilling as one in which the prize is a human soul. In the soul of Lewanika there was an arena with elemental forces clashing. Sometimes it seems as if he played the onlooker, waiting to see to which side he must fall. We read of his words, as we might read of one caught into a conflict without any choice of his own—of a soul whom some dim and shadowy powers were seeking. It is the story of a fierce and prolonged attack upon the soul of a chief, occupied and garrisoned by the immemorial customs of his race. The value of the story does not lie in the fact that this man was more precious than others, but rather in the fact that his life opened the way to other lives; and in many senses the man stood in almost a symbolic

relation to the Central Africa of his time. It lived in miniature within him. All the conditions of the conflict between paganism and Christ were set forth in him. He becomes a test-case. Such he remained in the judgment of his friends the missionaries till the close.

The first signal of the new world which was to draw near and in the end enclose him in its life, came with the knowledge of Khama. This chief was already a Christian when Lewanika came to know and to admire him. They had a community of interest in their dread of the Matabele, most formidable of warriors. Lewanika asked an alliance with Khama and begged of him the hand of his daughter and a black dog. The daughter and the alliance were not granted; about the black dog history is silent.

But his first prolonged contact with a Christian man came to Lewanika from Frederick Stanley Arnot,[1] who stayed in his capital for two years and let no opportunity pass to urge upon the king and his people the message of the Gospel. Arnot regarded himself as only a caretaker till Coillard should arrive; but during this time he started a school and preached and revealed in his life the glory of Christ. There were also devoted Jesuit priests who worked on the edge of Lewanika's dominions but were not suffered to establish themselves in the heart of the country. The king's

[1] The life of this brave adventurer for Christ has been told by Mr Ernest Baker in *Arnot, A Knight of Africa*; it is the life of one who, even among the missionaries of Africa, a great band, has a place of distinction. He was a free-lance of the Gospel, who went out with no Society to back him, and with little money—an advantage in his judgment because he was not worth pillaging.

preference for the Protestants must not be taken as a judgment upon theological positions. At this stage in his life Lewanika thought more of the material advantages to be gained from a mission than of any spiritual gain. He preferred the "brother" to the "fathers"; but no apologetic can be based upon this preference.

The last long battle was joined when in 1877 Coillard began his ministry at Sefula, a day's journey from the Court. Lewanika had tasted how bitter is the bread of exile; his city had been razed to the ground, and he had had to flee for his life, and remain hidden in the forests or among neighbouring tribes. The revolution was followed by a counter-revolution, and shortly before Coillard arrived Lewanika had come to his own again. His victory was followed by cruel reprisals; it seems as if in later life Lewanika claimed to have been magnanimous;[1] that is perhaps a matter of degree. Coillard certainly reports that he had removed his enemies, but had not lost the suspicion that near him were others, awaiting the moment of revenge. They had driven him from his throne once; they might do it again, or even despatch him into the unending exile.

The African chiefs of fifty or sixty years ago were men of remarkable sagacity; Moshesh, Molapo, Khama, were skilful in reading human hearts and had gifts of leadership which made them able to hold their own in statecraft. Lewanika was not to be ranked with the greatest, but all the witnesses agree that he was an able man with shrewdness and insight; generous and warm-hearted on occa-

[1] See p. 158.

sion, he was also vindictive and suspicious; and haunted as he was by fear, he was in those first years of his reign an easy victim of the lust for blood. A ruler with the power of making all who approached him shrink to a smaller stature; an autocrat with the autocrat's terror of his slaves; merry and cheerful in public, but gloomy and suspicious in private! Such was Lewanika, Chief of the Barotse.

It was to the roll of the drums that the chief entered into the life of Coillard, and by the roll of drums his presence was always heralded. The missionary and his people were on their way in 1886 to Lealui when they met the king, who was making a great pilgrimage to the tombs of the dead kings of his race. In this devotion Lewanika found the deepest satisfaction that his inherited religion could give. The cult of the kings united in itself at once a recognition of his own office and a solemn witness to the continuity of his race; and in some vague manner it reared a barrier against death, for the departed kings were deemed still to be living. Ancestor worship, which in its varied forms is deeply rooted in the human heart, provided the most solemn ritual of the Barotse. Before the king went out to war and on his return he would visit the tombs and offer libations to the *manes* of his forefathers. In such a characteristic moment of his life Lewanika appeared before Coillard, and the long contention became more personal.

In the khotla of the chief and in his own presence-chamber Coillard from the first spent many hours. There he taught him his alphabet and chatted

with him. There too he found occasion to reveal to the king the true way of life.[1]

"If I found myself engaged in a warlike enterprise, would you accompany me?"

"No, our mission is a mission of peace."

"If I had sent back for arms and ammunition, would you have refused me?"

"Yes, but I should have prayed for you."

"Oh yes!" he said with shouts of laughter, "and while that was going on Mathaha would have killed me."

Afterwards Coillard explained that if Lewanika took refuge with him he would stand at the door and say:

"This is a city of refuge. If you wish to violate it, you must kill me first."

"That is splendid."

This conversation showed how closely Lewanika associated the missionary with the material advantages he was supposed to bring. The teacher was in some ways inseparable from the association of the rich peoples from which he was believed to come. Khama was a Christian, and Khama was prosperous. Coillard was a teacher of the Christian way and Coillard came from the lands of which he had heard tales of wealth and splendour. These associations had to be shed before the real offer of the Gospel could be made. Almost the first task in such a conflict is to dissociate the Gospel from all material benefits.

Lewanika lived to become a most respected and energetic ruler and reformer; but at the time of which we speak his hands were red with the blood

[1] François Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, p. 223.

of his enemies. There were few old men in that land. Only a little while before, the king after welcoming a petty chief to his confidence, slew him treacherously. Coillard bade the king remember that he who killed with the sword would perish by the sword. Lewanika clapped his hands in loud approval!

But he had a conscience. He never ceased to hold out the hope that he would come into the Christian Faith a little later. Let him but finish his unpleasant work of the moment and then—"it will all come right." About some of the superstitions which he countenanced when it suited him he had no illusions. It was the custom of the diviners to consult the bones: "Pooh! The divining bones—they say what I wish," he declared. But it is never safe to take such words at their face-value in estimating such a character. Long after men have ceased to believe that a custom is rational it may hold them. It cannot be denied that the chief was a man of blood, despotic and cruel; but on the other hand he had amiability and good sense, and the manners of a polished gentleman. There were two Lewanikas; but as Coillard said, that was true of others also.

"It is a terrible thing to be a king," Lewanika said. "When I was only a private person, they said I was an exemplary young man. I delighted in hunting; and when I was not hunting, I was carving wood. . . . I sent away Litia's mother, my first wife, because of her immoral conduct. And that was all. They ruined me when they made a king of me. I have become a corrupt and blood-stained man!"

It was a necessary part of the missionary's task to show the king the meaning of sin; this was easier than to bring him to break with his past. Confession of sin may come to the lips almost too readily.

"What is it that you call sin?"
"It is the transgression of the law of God."
"I hear, but it is vague, tell me some sins."
I opened my New Testament at the seventh chapter of Mark, afterwards at the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. It was necessary for me not only to read, but with a straw to show him each word, to explain each term; some he understood, others not. He counted them upon his fingers, but when I showed him these words, "and other things like to these," he cried out in astonishment:
"And what are they?"

So long as the conversation turned upon the analysis of sin he would follow; but when he was urged to become a believer he had many pleas for delay: he must first learn to read and to know the Book; he must get others to come with him. It was not unpleasing to dally with the thought of becoming a Christian, and to encourage the missionary, but he was not ready to take up his cross, and for him the cross was to break away from the tyranny of pagan custom and extricate himself from the curse of the harem. Lewanika was even at that early time a foe of the drinking habits of his people. This evil was disastrous to public life, and for political reasons it was a danger; and Khama had shown that sobriety exalted a nation. So far as Christianity was concerned Lewanika's favourite vision was of the day when the nation would be converted in the mass.

What it means for a chief to break with tribal customs, no member of a Western nation can understand. The bond between a chief, so long as he is chief, and his people is one of peculiar strength. If, for example, a thunderstorm burst upon the town, it was the custom for the lesser chiefs and the family of the king to run to him so that if he perished they might perish with him.

Lewanika did not dispute the truth of the Gospel and his need of forgiveness. He surrendered these approaches to the missionary. But he would not break free and bear the reproaches of his people. Coillard missed no occasion. Once he gave the king a white jacket:

"I shall put it on, and I shall be transformed and nobody will know me!"

"Ah! Lewanika" [Coillard said], "it is a transformation much more radical which we expect in you—not a change of garment but of heart."

"I know it," he answered.

As critics of a campaign may sometimes conjecture from their safe shelter, far from the battle, how this commander or that did not always use the best tactics, so it may be questioned whether Coillard was not too eager and too anxious in his campaign, and whether for that reason his attacks were the more skilfully parried. Is the direct frontal attack which he favoured always the wisest? It may even be that it became dangerous for Lewanika to have so many opportunities for allowing his sentiment towards the Gospel to have play, when for himself he was keeping out of the range of possibility the act of surrender to Christ.

In her delightful volume of travels Miss Mackintosh

tells of an old paddler on the Zambezi; he had paddled Coillard and loved him, and knew that he was a man of God. "I asked him if he were a Christian, but he answered with equal frankness: 'All the missionaries make me tired talking like that.'" The story may suggest that in Africa as in England it may be possible through an over-eagerness to give an occasion to the subtle forces of evil working against faith.

It would be unjust to forget that Coillard had a thousand ways of commending Christ. The travellers who tarried with him saw in his very face and bearing, in his courtesy and unselfishness, the marks of his Lord. Nor can any reader of the recorded interviews between the chief and the missionary miss the passion for souls; but there are evidences more than once that Lewanika was merely playing with the rebukes and invitations of the Gospel. Still, who can say what was passing through that bewildered heart?

Sometimes he was very near to the final step. One such evening may be recalled. It was Sunday after service, and Lewanika had come into Coillard's house for a long talk. Outside was his retinue; their giggling shocked him.[1]

"There is no seriousness in them. It is in this way they stifle the things of God."

"And you—what seriousness is there in you?"

"Me? None. I can say nothing of myself. I do not know what God will make of me. The others can still be converted."

"God wills that you too should be converted. But

[1] E. Favre, *François Coillard, Missionnaire au Zambèze*, p. 294 (Vol. III.).

perhaps you expect that since you are a king, God will open another door for you."

"No! It is not that. But I am bound hand and foot by the Barotse. These women are not mine. They are thrust upon me by the nation. They make up part of the power which they have given to me. When there has been trouble in my harem I have wished to seize the opportunity to drive all of them away and set myself free. The chiefs are opposed to this, and have been on the point of revolting. If only I had someone to second me and follow me. But I am alone."

Afterwards the conversation turned to the 139th Psalm.

"Give me your Bible," said Coillard, "and I will mark it." One of the attendants had carried off the Bible; he had to be summoned and the Bible brought at the king's request. The missionary made a big mark against the Psalm, and a piece of paper for the king to find the place. It was supper-time. Coillard made a fire for the attendants outside the hut; and the king and he talked over the Psalm, which Lewanika read. Lewanika was very quiet and happy that evening. "I must find means of coming by myself to spend an evening here with you. It is so good to be here. I am no longer a stranger here. I am at home." He went out with a lantern and found his servants happy, and with great heartiness they bade their missionary good night.

While the missionaries were busy upon their approaches to the king, there were other forces crossing from the same world out of which the Gospel had come. The suspicion that he had been betrayed in the treaty made with the Chartered Company set up a fierce reaction in Lewanika's

soul; and the war between the British and the Boers did not fail to awaken many doubts in his shrewd mind. There was one also—"Alexander the coppersmith"—who suggested to the king that the Bible was a book of fables. All these influences converged upon him. More and more complex grew the spiritual problem. Coillard was often desperate in his struggle:

> Poor Lewanika! I shall pray for him and weep for him till the Lord shall say to me as to Samuel—It is enough.

The king was like a man whom a current was carrying away; to save him Coillard would lay hold upon him and even wound him.

One day a messenger brought a word from the king that he was not coming to worship.

"He is not coming!"

"No."

"Why? Is he ill?"

"No! But he said if you asked the reason, I must say '*For nothing.*'" Such a studied insult wounded Coillard. He saw how the king was calling a corvée to rebuild his harem; he seemed to be drifting out of his reach. Coillard felt he must make another and desperate attempt. He was ill at the time; he seemed crushed. The thought of the king and his accursed harem filled his mind night and day. He wrote his thoughts in a letter which he himself read to the king:

> It is God who has established you the shepherd of His people. Men are the cattle of God, the nations are His flocks. Kings are His shepherds. Then, in the name of this God, who is your Master, I come to demand of

you in what way you are fulfilling His mandate to-day. Have you not yourself dismissed and "eaten" [*i.e.* confiscated the cattle and the people] of one of your principal chiefs, because on a certain occasion he had abused his power and oppressed his people? What does your Master say to you concerning the way in which you tend this nation which is not your property but His? Do you believe that you have the right and the power to impose such crushing burdens on the whole nation? . . . My friend, do not allow the flatterers who surround you to deceive you. The truth—a disagreeable truth—is that among the people there is great discontent and murmurings. . . . Where are the kingdoms of Lobengula, of Kangombi, of Motianivo, of Mosili and of others, who shut their ears to every warning? You are alone, as a hut in the midst of a village in ruins. . . . You are my friend; you respect the missionaries; you favour the schools, and you say, "I love the things of God as you know well; what more do you ask of me? Myself?"

"Yes! Yourself, for Jesus said: *He who is not with me, is against me.*"

The appeal made an impression on the king. He was frightened; he trembled: "What can I answer? What can I say? I am the guilty one." The Gambella thanked Coillard. A long silence followed. Coillard prayed and departed; he was exhausted, and being now an old man and frail in health, he had a night of fever. But he had played once more the evangelist and prophet to the king.

When the king was proposing to visit Europe Coillard set before him a clear analysis of the reasons which prevented him from becoming a Christian.

The first obstacle is that your conscience has never been awakened. As a young man, as a subject, and afterwards as king, you have done abominable things.

You know it but you do not feel your guilt. The second obstacle is your wives; at other times you used to say that that was not one of them, and I used to believe you partly. But I have changed my position, and to-day I see that there is the chief obstacle. The third is fear of the Barotse.

Lewanika came to England for the coronation of Edward the Seventh (June 1902). Before he left Coillard had much talk with him. One day he asked Lewanika what he would say to the King of England if he were admitted to his presence. The chief, in nowise troubled and conscious of his dignity, answered, "When kings are seated together, there are not wanting subjects of conversation."[1] The conversion of Paul gave the missionary the theme for his parting message to Lewanika. He was going on a journey; it was on a journey that Paul was converted. The chief would find good and bad things among the whites. Among Christian nations not every man is a Christian. But there is something above the king, it is the law impregnated with the Gospel, the law to which the king submits. In that land of the whites he must seek for good things, with which to feed his famished people.

When the king returned everyone thought that he was about to confess himself a Christian; but he held back. He said he supposed it was his heart that stopped him. "No one can know what passes there." According to every appearance the old life swallowed him up again. The occasion to break away from the old bondage had come and passed. He had charmed all who met him

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 501.

in England; his manners were perfect; in homes where his name and his deeds were familiar he was received with amazement by the children. What a charming gentleman this chief was! Could it really be true that he had been through scenes of terror and bloodshed, and that his hands were not clean of blood? No one knows the heart; and few can tell the pull of the old life upon the soul of a chief. It must be remembered too that by this time he was well advanced in middle life. The time when there is so mighty a movement upon the waters of life had long been passed. He went back to Lealui to his throne and to the harem; he went back to a life between the lines.

During the brief time which passed between the return of the king and the death of Coillard the chief gave his friend much additional trouble through his patronage of the "Ethiopians." They appealed to his pride, always a ready way of approach to the king. There were other reasons for anxiety; but with all his tenacity of purpose Coillard sought not only to win him from such ways but to capture the citadel.

In May 1904 Coillard had his last interview with the king, who had asked Coillard to breakfast with him.

"He waited for me till 8.30 but I was unable to take any food. I wished to speak to him; he had so many people around his *kachandi*, and he himself was so ill with rheumatism in the head, that I could not speak. I went away at 9.30; and at 11.30 I embarked for Loatile tired out."

This was on May 16th: on May 27th Coillard died. At the last he waited eagerly to see the

king. Lewanika was content on two occasions to make enquiries; he did not come himself. Coillard saw him no more.

Lewanika never took that last step for which Coillard had waited. He lived till 1916; he was honoured both by the English residents and his people. He lived to see his land rid of many abuses —of sorcery and lawlessness; and far away from Europe, in that country once a land of blood, he took his part in the Great European War. To few chieftains was it given to see his land during his lifetime swept in so orderly a fashion into the orbit of Western civilization. During his later years he was Christian in his sympathies and proved in many ways the friend of the missionaries, but he never made the decision for which his friend had prayed and agonized.

As he lived, so he died. There had been a contest for the innermost sanctuary of his soul; the outworks were won; but not the citadel. The power of paganism is like the power of the forests in Africa. It sweeps back upon the land where it is cleared. It is jealous, watchful, sleepless; in this man it seemed to prevail. Through what scenes of struggle he passed who can conjecture? It has not been given to many to have so consistent a force bent upon their redemption as the eager love of Coillard. He was a restless, eager fighter, a match for the jungle if any man can be. For years the fight went in his favour; but the forest crept back. Was it for a mere technical distinction that Coillard was fighting? Was it sufficient to make a composition with the pagan heart—give him the harem and some of the customs of

his fathers, on condition that he remained a social reformer ?

All his life would have seemed idle to Coillard if he had not believed that through faith in Christ a human spirit entered into life, and that such an act of faith made a sharp distinction between the old and the new. It would have been meaningless to him to preach the good news of life in Christ if there were not a world of difference between the Christian soul and the soul not yet Christian. It was for no trifle that Coillard strove ; and if he lost in this battle it is unjust to his memory to blur the failure.

The story of Lewanika's funeral rites is given by the French missionaries.[1] He died in 1916 on February 4th, and his body was solemnly placed on the large canoe, the eyes towards the east. Down the canal which the king had cut, the funeral barge moved stern foremost followed by the other canoes. " ' Forced onwards but contesting every inch, the victim of the Last Enemy resolutely turns his back so as not to see that great Victor of Heathenism, Death.' "

" Immediately behind the pavilion which overshadows the body a woman is doubled up rather than stooping. It is Mawana, or Amatende, the only wife who followed the king at the time of Akufuna's revolution. She was with him in his distress ; she now holds the place of supreme honour as chief mourner. Faithful unto death, she will watch beside the corpse during the long and tedious hours whilst the tomb is being dug. . . ."

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *The New Zambesi Trail*, p. 218.

When all was ready, the sun was low on the horizon. The voice of Lewanika's brother, Mui Mui, was heard; all but the royal family and their European guests had retired behind the screen. Lewanika was now to become a divinity and the common people must not witness it. Night falling, the grave-diggers were left alone to fill up the trench and to erect a fence round this tomb which henceforth became a national sanctuary.

Lewanika was gathered to his fathers. He was now among the deified kings; before his tomb offerings would be laid. The man whose favourite hymn was, "What a Friend we have in Jesus," sleeps among his own people and his tomb has become a sacred place. Among the monuments of the earth which kindle wonder at the sorrow and tragedy of our human lot, there can be few more pathetic than the last resting-place of Lewanika.

No one can follow this man into the unseen; it is with the earthly life alone we have to do. Who can miss the tragedy in the story? The mired soul struggling to be free; the grim array of the powers which filled his world from childhood; Nyambe the dark inscrutable spirit, and the other spirits, which haunted for him the forest and the river; the kings, his peers in other days, still living and still calling for the worship of their people! And on the other hand the powers from another world, though on this earthly plane—the sound ever growing louder of the Western world; and in that confused murmur the sharp, insistent, clear word of the moruti; and the strong Son of God drawing near and claiming his soul!

It was a tournament in which others were doing battle for the prize, the soul of a chief, weak and inconstant. It should end in the victory of Christ; but that was not to be the end so far as the human story can go. The drums throbbed around him as he was carried to the abode of his fathers; and with them Lewanika sleeps his last sleep.

It is only a Church vigilant, and mighty as the forest and the jungle, that can deal with the powers of paganism; and even for such a Church there may be many a reverse. Yet not in vain did Coillard toil for Lewanika. His witness, if it did not win him, won others around him; and if the chief himself never took up his cross to follow Christ, by his reforms he made it easier for others to follow. Often did he stand in his later years on the threshold, hearing the happy voices within and seeing others enter into a joy which he was not to share. The Church of Christ has often been founded as it was in Barotseland on failure. But nothing can take the glory from the Christian passion which is revealed in this story of Coillard's struggle for the soul of Lewanika. How often would he have gathered this man and he would not! But here the story stands for the rebuke and encouragement of all the servants of God. It is in this way souls are won. It may be that even a love like this some may evade. But in no other way can they be won but by the apostolic way of blood and tears.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HEAD OF A MISSION

1892–1900

> Besides all these things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I burn not?
>
> —*2 Corinthians* xi. 28.

> The characteristic of the seeking soul is solitariness. . . . The characteristic of the accepted soul, so joined unto the Lord as to be of one spirit with Him, is fellowship; in awaking up unto Christ, it awakens unto its brethren; its exclamation is that of the Psalmist, "Behold there are many with me."
>
> DORA GREENWELL, *The Patience of Hope.*

FOR the study of an individual missionary it becomes necessary to set him apart from his company, and to leave in the background the team of which he is a member. But it should be made plain that Coillard had no desire to be separated from his company; he not only believed in fellowship, he rejoiced in it. From the beginning of the Zambezi Mission he had appealed for helpers; with his pleas for reinforcements he gave his Society no rest. He meant to lay the foundations of a mission which would have stations at every strategic point, and in the end would evangelize the entire country of the Barotse. Of those who came in answer

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to his call it is impossible to write in detail. Some were Basuto, others Swiss or British, but chiefly they were French. If he met with failure and even treachery from one of his colleagues, it must be added that no missionary had more loyal comrades, and there are many graves by the great river to tell that these pioneers kept their vows to be faithful to death.

As the work of a mission grows, the prophet finds himself of necessity the builder of institutions, and the guide and leader of a team. He does not cease to be a prophet, though he has to provide through an ordered society the means whereby the prophetic word can be retained and interpreted and transmitted. The ever-present danger is that the institution may stifle the prophet. Coillard gave himself to both ministries, but it is inevitable that in the second period the superintendence of the mission, and of the Church which arose out of the mission, took up more of his time. The prophet was also the pastor, and the pastor fulfilled in due course the office of a bishop.

In 1892, along with two Basuto evangelists and three young Barotse, Coillard established himself at Loatile, near to the capital. His new home was on the site of the sorcerer's hillock:

> It is there that sorcerers are executed, being first poisoned, and then burnt alive. No one has ever lived here; no one passes by it. The brushwood and thorn bushes which cover it are the haunts of stinging flies, and every imaginable venomous insect, of mice, serpents, and other reptiles from the surrounding plain. . . . Under these thorns and briars, among creeping and crawling beasts, lie broken bows and assegai shafts, the decaying fragments of wooden stools and bowls, cal-

cined human bones, bleached by the sun, discoloured by the damp. All round, and everywhere stretches the plain—that barren, melancholy plain so dear to the Barotse.[1]

The plain was dominated by the king's house. This was the centre of the harem, the harem of the town, and the town of the kingdom! It was not surprising therefore that the king desired to have the Church services in the khotla; but Coillard was determined that this should not be. The new faith must be free from the control of the Court, and from any suspicion of such control.

Coillard's new abode had all the customary enemies—centipedes, beetles and mosquitoes; but the worst foes were the battalions of fighting ants. The lords of creation, Coillard remarked, who can rule the mightiest mammals and cetaceans, are helpless before this insect. "One sees them setting out in innumerable battalions in serried well-disciplined ranks winding about like an immense living ribbon of black watered silk, two or three inches across." And woe to the man or beast who treads on the ribbon! In addition to such terrors in those first days at Loatile there was an epidemic of smallpox, which caused the missionaries much anxiety, but did not thin their ranks.

During the years 1892-1896 the new station was slowly built up: a school was founded, and a church was built and opened in March 1894. The Barotse proved in these undertakings industrious and skilful in craftsmanship. Lewanika himself was a good carpenter, and took a pride in the

[1] François Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, p. 478.

construction of the new barge, which, like the University boats, is built each year. The church building became the marvel of the country-side, and was a splendid memorial of a very faithful and noble man—Waddell, the craftsman who had been with Coillard through his wanderings.

It is here that a tribute should be paid to this Scots artisan who had two great passions in his life, first and all-comprehensive, his love to Christ, and then his devotion to Coillard. When Waddell had volunteered to join his party, Coillard had said: "We are poor, and go to a deadly climate; no one ought to follow us unless he is called by Him who has always led us, and is prepared to forsake all worldly prospects, and his very life." Upon such terms Waddell had enlisted. He was the handy-man of the mission; he spoke little in public, he was not learned, but he had a singular power over the Africans. They respected his skill; and listened to his homely words about his Redeemer all the more readily when they had toiled with him. It was like him to write to his mother in Scotland, "I could not hate an African and love you." It was not his destiny to end his days by the Zambezi; a fatal and terrible disease struck him down in 1893, and for years he was an invalid in Scotland awaiting the slow approach of death with unwavering faith. The tropics had stricken him down; but nothing could rob him of his memories of sound work wrought by his hands for Christ in the heart of Africa. And if he had been asked for the greatest of his mercies, he would have said it was the fellowship in such service with his hero Coillard; and Coillard, like the Apostle Paul, was never tired of

praising this builder who built for the glory of his Redeemer.

By the shores of Essex there stands the ancient church of St Peter's-in-the-wall, built by St Ched in the seventh century—a fragment which carries back the observer to the days when the little band of Christians in this island, beset by pagans, dared to set forth their faith in stone. We reverence those gallant believers who carried the stone and hewed the wood in those Saxon times. Some day in Central Africa pilgrims may come to the churches built in the early days of the mission: they will not forget Coillard and Christina and the other missionary doctors and teachers and evangelists; and with them, as the representative of all good craftsmen, they will salute the memory of Waddell.

It was not only the church that claimed the labours of the mission company; between the church and the village the road was a mass of mud and water in the bad weather, and the Barotse, who did not hesitate to splash their way through on other days, were afraid of catching cold on Sundays. For them a causeway was built, with the practical help of the king. He agreed to do the part from the village to the canal while the mission did the other section from the station to the canal; and there the mission became responsible for a foot-bridge. So the solid path to the church was made, for the people had a mind to work.

About this time the Matabele, still under Lobengula, threatened the Barotse from the south. All the gods gave their counsel to an expedition whereby the frontiers might be defended. Litia left the capital at the head of the troops; but the expedi-

tion returned. The omens had proved in the end unfavourable; they had found a dead rabbit, a land tortoise, a serpent—that was enough. The chiefs, led by Litia, tried to resist the contagion of cowardice. But a tempest broke upon them; that settled the matter, and the expedition returned. Fortunately for the Barotse the end of the Matabele was now very near.[1] "These human tigers had filled up the cup of their iniquities and it overflowed." As a nation the Matabele ceased to exist. Lobengula was wounded in an engagement near the Shangani River and died upon the mountains, where a cairn of stones shows where he rests. The removal of this enemy made life for the Barotse more secure.

After the church was opened in 1894 Coillard entered upon the most encouraging time he had known in the new mission. At the opening they sang the hymn which had been written for Leribé:

C'est un lieu saint
C'est un lieu redoubtable
C'est la porte du ciel
C'est la maison de Dieu;
Parmi tous les autres lieux
C'est là que se tient l'Éternal
Alléluia. Amen.

It is characteristic of Coillard, the most spiritual of men, that he had a great reverence for sacred buildings, and a definite understanding of the place they fill in the life of a Christian community. Certainly the opening of the church in Lealui was marked by a revived interest in the Gospel among the tribesmen. The king was most favourable for

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 529.

a while; he would deplore bitterly the falling away of his people who had once been Christians, even though that falling away was through his influence.

A conference of all the missionaries was held in the same year at Kazungula; ten years had passed since they had crossed the river for the first time, and now there was a station by the ford in full working order. At Lealui as well as in other stations there was manifest the beginnings of revival. Coillard, himself the child of a revival, never ceased to believe that there are seasons when the tides of the spirit are at the flood; he watched for such times.

Many encouraging signs were given. Litia, the heir-apparent, after a time of coldness had come back to the Faith, in which he lives to this day. His influence was mighty. Each Sunday there were three hundred to three hundred and fifty persons in the church, Lewanika and his wives at the head. The chief declared that only his body now was pagan. Coillard did not preach soft nothings to his people; they had to listen to one who discoursed not only of mercy but of judgment. His hearers stood much from him. This was due in no small measure to his understanding of his people and to his inborn courtesy; the least gaucherie is fatal in dealing with tribes in whose tradition ritual is no mere added grace, but a sacred obligation. Ritual among a primitive people is conceived as doing things, so that a breach of etiquette is no trivial thing. One of Coillard's evangelists once shook his forefinger at his hearers while he was preaching; no one came to church

during the rest of that day, and the wrath of the tribe was loosed on him. Coillard himself had a remarkable power of entering into the heart of his people, and by his tact and grace he was saved from many perils and won for himself a large liberty. Deportment is not an extra accomplishment in the equipment of a missionary.

On July 17th, 1894, Coillard celebrated his sixtieth birthday, and his colleagues assembled at 4.30 to sing a morning greeting to their chief:

Oui, je bénirai Dieu tout le temps de ma vie.

The following June Coillard was able to make an exploration up the river. Lewanika insisted on his taking with him an escort of several chiefs, each of whom brought his retinue and paddlers, forty in all, for the canoes. Everything went well till they reached the Balubale tribes. There they encountered a formidable chief, Kakenge—a vassal, but a rebellious vassal, of Lewanika. The story of their encounter is told in *Coillard of the Zambesi* [1] and reveals once more the wisdom and courage of this man of peace.

Coillard's envoys had been greeted with threats and contumely by the chief and driven away by him. Some of the Barotse were for attacking Kakenge with their fire-arms; others wished to load the canoes and escape. Coillard rejected both methods. He told his people of his deliverance in earlier days from Masonda, and added:

> The heart of Kakenge is as much in the hand of God as that of Lewanika or of Masonda. To-morrow, you will see, Kakenge will not only send food, but will give

[1] Page 400.

us words of peace. . . . The morning broke, we had not been attacked. But where was the promised deliverance? The whole morning passed thus—waiting. Nothing! The afternoon wore on. Nothing! At last towards three o'clock a procession, which I saw coming out of the village, advanced slowly toward us. It was the food from Kakenge which I had promised. Baskets of manioc, millet, sweet potatoes, fowls, and what not!

It turned out that if they had taken either of the other ways the whole party would have perished. The chief had sent orders up the river to have them "arrested," which was the polite paraphrase for "massacred." But seeing the party wait, he came to believe in their good intentions, and begged them to return in the following year; he also gave the missionary two of his children to take away to be taught. Twelve members of the expedition were so impressed by the proof that God hears prayer that they publicly professed themselves Christians on their return. They had begun to pray in their extremity, and they went on to pray for the pardon of their sins and the new life.

It was becoming evident to the missionaries' council that they must have reinforcements; and to this end Coillard was set apart to visit Europe. The years 1896-1898 he spent in this arduous task. One more of his escapes from death must be recorded at the outset of this journey. It had been hoped that he would sail in the *Drummond Castle*, but there was no berth to spare. That ship went down, and only three survivors remained to tell the tale.

Coillard had a great welcome in Europe. He had the reward of a good correspondent, who had

carried a great number of his friends with him through his adventures and troubles and victories. Like his friend Moffat, he knew how to tell his story. His literary style was clear and distinguished; he had almost every tone of expression at his command; he could depict an incident in a living and even thrilling fashion, so that his books apart from their missionary value are in themselves masterpieces. Through his writings and through the testimony of his colleagues and many travellers he had become well-known. He had now to meet the most subtle of all perils which the heroes of religious communities have to meet.

To the list of dangers which St Paul gives, one more must be added in these days—"in perils of platforms." Religious societies make heroes of their saints, and in so doing run the risk of keeping the hero and losing the saint. Coillard knew the danger. "Le moi est un de ces reptiles, qui s'introduit par le plus petit trou." (The ego is one of those reptiles which gets in by the smallest hole.) It is not the fatigue of the journeys nor the strain upon the preacher that is to be dreaded, but the somewhat feverish and even hysterical interest which may accompany the triumphant progress of the saint. He may take refuge in flight or in prayer. Coillard took the way of self-humiliation in prayer. He was unequal as a preacher; but the testimonies agree that he had a strong hold on his audiences. He was short in stature, his voice was not loud, but he left upon his hearers, wherever he went, the impression that here was one who had obeyed the heavenly vision and had never lost his love for souls. But at what

expense of spiritual struggle he was able to continue in this long campaign without losing his simplicity of soul, the readers of his journals may tell, but only in part.

Coillard was, as we have seen, a fervent Frenchman, but the geography of the Kingdom of God for him was not determined by racial barriers; it was necessary indeed for him to resist the Chauvinism sweeping over the French churches. Madagascar was a French colony, Barotseland a Rhodesian—why not concentrate upon Madagascar? That was the position against which Coillard definitely set himself, and not in vain.

With those who knew him in his journeys through this country he has left the memory of a fine courtesy. He was carrying a heavy burden but he could be merry on occasions. Children loved him. He was a delightful guest, never thinking of himself.

On December 10th, 1898, the return was made to Africa. In all there were not less than eighty persons (including fifteen new missionaries), twenty-one wagons, and three hundred and thirty oxen to set out upon the journey to the Zambezi. It was for Coillard an answer to the prayers and toils of years. In September 1899 the missionary was once more in Lealui. Then followed for Coillard a period of deep gloom. The work had made an advance; two new stations had been founded. But the missionary had a spiritual crisis to meet. He was fresh from his European journeys with their triumphs; he saw the tremendous task before him; he shrank from the responsibility. "If only they would leave me quiet in the shade!" Silence

fell upon him, he wrote little; the least effort cost him much. Moreover there were many sorrows to face. Six of his companions in the service died, six others left the country. The king kept him hovering between despair and hope.[1] In his inner life he had no doubts of his own forgiveness; but the utmost for which he hoped was to hear, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; and once he had had many dreams of a complete triumph to offer to his Lord!

These burdens were heavy for a man now old, and suffering in body and mind; but it was the Ethiopian movement which tried him most. This movement is one of many expressions which the awakening of racial consciousness has taken in Africa. The Ethiopian Church is a church of black people who believe that they are wise enough to do without the white missionaries—a Church entirely black and affiliated more or less with the Negro Episcopal Church of America.[2] It tended in practice to become a Cave of Adullam for the discontented among the servants of the missions, and to draw its recruits less from the hosts of pagans than from those who were already Christian. It cannot be denied that the Africans have endured many wrongs from the white people; but unhappily the expression of the African mind taken by Ethiopianism was negative and bitter. The movement gave Coillard much distress. Had he been younger or in more robust health he might have seen it in its true proportions, but as it came to him it was a threat to his life-work. He saw his mission crumbling away before his eyes. When

[1] H. Dieterlen, *François Coillard*, p. 66. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

his two trusted evangelists, Paul and Willie, were caught into the movement and began to poison the mind of the king, he was crushed to the earth.

The years which followed his journeys to Europe were years marked by much sadness. There were many at home who, when they knew of the losses which were falling upon the mission, advocated retreat from the Zambezi. Coillard bore a heavy load of ill-health; he had Ethiopianism to encounter with its campaign of suspicion and racial enmity; he had to share in the sorrows of his bereaved friends, as one after another from their ranks was surrendered to disease and death; depressed, broken in health, conscious of no glory on this scene to cheer him, one thing he would not do—he would not retreat.

> Do people seriously think we are capable of deserting a post, because it is perilous above all others? It is the Cross, yes, the Cross with its sufferings and shame that has redeemed the world, and since in Christianity Jesus and His Cross are not to be separated, let us thank God that here it is given to us to know both.[1]

[1] Mackintosh, p. 427.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST WATCH

1901–1904

As travellours when the twilight's come
And in the sky the stars appear,
The past daies accidents do summe
With, Thus wee saw there, and thus here.

Then Jacob-like lodge in a place,
A place, and no more, is set down,
Where till the day restore the race
They rest and dream homes of their own.

So for this night I linger here
And, full of tossings to and fro,
Expect till when Thou wilt appear,
That I may get me up and go.

HENRY VAUGHAN, *The Pilgrimage.*

COILLARD had now entered upon the last watch. It would be a happy task to report that he had prosperity as he neared the end; that was not to be. He had never been able to treat his adversities lightly, and as his health became more and more impaired, he was less able even for a brief time to shake off the troubles which beset him; at times they became almost obsessions which filled him with terror. To the end faith was in conflict. But the cardinal fact is that he stood his ground. *That ye might be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all—to stand.*

His friends at home worried him a little; they were so quick to detect any unwise step taken by the missionaries; they had a keener eye for the imprudence of man, than for the hand of God. The climate had played havoc with the pioneers; well, the climate on the Zambezi was but the equivalent of the direct hostility to be met in Uganda, where Hannington and others had fallen, or in China, where the Boxers had recently slain many missionaries. If the Church is not to retreat before the cruel hand of man, why should it retreat before the onslaught of the miasmas and fevers of Africa?

In the early part of 1901 Coillard was much alone, and suffered much from fever. "If God does not soon grant a revival," he wrote, "I feel myself nigh to despair. I lose confidence in my preaching." On May 19th, "Another Sunday passed, and no conversion—Lord, how long!"

The climate had still more tribute to take from the missionary ranks. It was not till 1902 that the first specially constructed house was sent out, designed to provide a refuge from the mosquito.[1] The heavy toll had to be paid in full. But in this —the severest test of all—Coillard did not flinch; he believed so much in the mission that he was ready to let others die for it as well as himself. The motto of their company was, "Till death we will be faithful to Thee"; and if death were the way to hasten the victory, then death let it be! To the very threshold of eternity they would sing:

Take, O Jesus, take my life,
It is all thine own.

[1] See *Education in Africa*, T. Jesse Jones.

The supreme test of a commander comes in the hour when for the carrying out of his plans he has to throw one after another of his divisions into the zone of death.

Coillard's letters are still faithful expression of all his moods of hope and fear. Sometimes he thinks that his friends lay too much stress upon the outward privations which the missionaries endure, and forget their spiritual dangers, faced as they are daily by a society steeped in paganism, and without the reinforcements which can always be found within the borders of Christendom. The outpost in such a place as Barotseland is in grave need of all the prayers and the love of his friends, and since his days are mortgaged to a multitude of material duties, he cannot live unless he is set by his friends in the environment of light into which prayer alone can lift him.

There were encouragements. To the school which was again growing, Coillard turned his thoughts as Christmas drew near. The plan was to unite the five schools in the district for a festival.[1] The chiefs entered heartily into the spirit of the plan and were ready to provide shelter and food. The weather was favourable: there was no fiery sky and no deluge; the sun was discreetly veiled and the clouds kept back the rain. It restored hope to hear in the church the voices of the children singing the songs of Christmas. Afterwards there were games and feastings, and for the crowning moment, the Christmas tree! They could not truthfully chant, "Mon beau sapin"; it was not a fir, but a palm tree. Coillard was trying to let

[1] E. Favre, Vol. III., p. 496.

the African children know what he had known, when first they sang the *Gloria* in Asnières and the light flashed from the first Christmas tree upon the Protestant community in the village. Life seemed to turn back on itself as the end drew near.

In 1902 Coillard had to coach Lewanika for his journey to England; he counted his money, and planned his wardrobe, which did him credit. To the accompaniment of deafening shouts, the king set out on his journey; the pride of the Barotse was stirred: "There are two men in the world, King Edward and Lewanika!" they said. It was a journey of which to the end of his days the chief loved to speak; without question it did much to make him a contented and loyal subject. He was inspired to persist in his reformation of manners, but as we have seen, it did not bring him into the Christian life.

During this period of his life Coillard was glad when he could hand over the charge of the school to the two lady missionaries, so that he could give himself more entirely to his pastoral work. He loved to visit his Zambezians in their own homes. There he could be master of the situation; no interruption need be feared, and they were very amiable and pleasant in their talk. The memory of the Saviour's patience with people, when He was tired, made him marvel. Jesus was always the same—always calm and ready to give Himself.

During the king's absence Coillard's letters once more take a new tone of hopefulness. He tells how in that land he found beautiful characters; wild flowers, rare and tiny amid many thorns, but their scent was all the sweeter. Some of his

friends were demanding conversions. But it was not yet time to speak of them. Patience a little longer! There were already faint lights on the horizon and the day was not far away. The high priest of the tomb of Moramboa declared himself for God—a miracle of the Divine grace, an earnest of things to come!

In a happy mood Coillard betook himself to the Conference at Sesheke in June 1902. Once more his Bible opened at the 103rd Psalm, this time on hearing of the peace made between the Boers and the British. But on his return to Lealui he had serious trouble in his eyes and a throat affection which brought his activity almost to a standstill. The doctor told him he must go to the Cape or to Europe. It cost him a pang to think of leaving Africa at this time. With the uprising of the Ethiopian Church a struggle was before the mission; to leave at this time would be to leave the scene of his work in a moment of peril. The necessity for a journey to Europe was happily averted, but in 1903 he made his last journey to South Africa. Before that time however it was his task to welcome in song the return of the king. It was a song of national rejoicing, but it had within it a prayer that the king might be saved, and go to heaven when he set out on his longer journey.

Of Coillard's last journey to Barotseland there exists a record, tender and beautiful, in Miss Mackintosh's book, *The New Zambesi Trail.* She had set out for the Cape when she heard of her uncle's threatened blindness. The picture she has left is of a traveller, resourceful and calm and utterly unselfish; about him there was no boastfulness; he was an old hand

at the traveller's life, but what had he which he had not received ?

Anybody might have found it
But His whisper came to me.

Leribé was visited for the last time. There his friends flocked round him in his Ebenezer; and four hundred partook of the Holy Communion with him. But one figure, Nathanael, was missing. They reported that he had fallen into his second childhood; but great was Coillard's joy, when he visited him, to find his spirit peaceful and radiant. They took the Sacred Feast together on the threshold of eternity. Separation did not seem bitter to them now.

"What shall we sing ?"

His face lit up: "Sing 'If you knew what a Saviour I possess.'"

The song being ended, the old warrior prayed; and the two friends parted. In the annals of the Church in Africa this knightly Basuto will always live with Coillard; he had many on his roll who fell away, but Makatoko endured to the end.

Coillard's last journey up the Zambezi to his station was made in storms. It was the time of the rains, and tempest followed tempest: the goods were mouldy, his luggage damaged, canoes were overturned and many of his belongings lost. For a man of sixty-eight, seasoned traveller though he was, these hardships were not easy to bear. Nor did the mission bring him much relief to his spirit. In the opening of 1904 he was sick in body and troubled in mind; the least exertion exhausted him. "The tabernacle is growing old and I feel

it." No longer was he able to rally his forces, as once he had been able. The Ethiopians troubled him gravely, led as they were by the evangelist Willie whom he had trusted and loved. Coillard in his absence had written to him imploring him not to work at Lealui but to seek a new field, in which his former friends would be able to work in harmony with him. He answered by an insulting letter; if it had been an enemy, Coillard could have borne it, but this man was one of his own household.

The Ethiopians for a time seemed to carry all before them; the school was emptying, the Christians were shaken, and the evangelists in training were giving anxiety. The king wavered between the mission and the Ethiopians. Coillard accused him to his face of professing friendship, while he hid a dagger under his cloak. This plain dealing had its effect. In January 1904 there is once more a calmer tone in Coillard's letters; something of the terror which this new movement aroused in him had subsided. It must be remembered always that it was an old man, sick in body, who had to face, as it seemed to him, this revelation that his work was crumbling beneath his feet. But though he was able to regard the Ethiopians more calmly, the danger was not over. The school of evangelists for a time was in open revolt; their test demand was for English to be taught to them and less Scripture. This was but a symptom of the trouble, which had its roots in the growing self-consciousness of the African peoples; and it gave an occasion for the display of much ignorance and conceit. It is not surprising that the old

missionary was saddened by the ingratitude of his beloved boys, and could not see the soul of goodness in the heart of the movement.

His last Easter was spent with his missionary colleagues at Sefula. One of the themes for the Conference was, "Love, the active agent in the evangelization of the world, filling up that which was lacking of the sufferings of Christ for the Church which is His body." Two impressions are left of the Conference: Mlle. Kiener said, "He transported us to heaven"; Coillard said himself, "It seems to me I am still on the margin and I have comprehended nothing as yet of the love of God."

In April he came back to Lealui to find that a fresh struggle awaited him. The evangelists now threatened to go over in a body to the Ethiopians. They were demanding, still more loudly, English and arithmetic. Coillard went to interview them, and besought them not to destroy the work of God; there were echoes of St Paul in his appeals:

> You have several masters, but after all you have only one father. I speak to you as to my children whom I have begotten and loved. Follow my counsel![1]

It was not any specific demand which troubled the French missionaries; but the spirit of the men, who seemed to have lost their loyalty to the mission, and to be absorbed with other ideals than those of their first love for Christ.

After Coillard had made his appeal the evangelists begged for a little time. The hours of waiting were hours of anguish. Coillard passed them alone in the bush. They came back at length prepared

[1] E. Favre, Vol. III., p. 550.

to go back to their institution; "to despise the counsels of an old man," they said, "is to be lost." They prayed together, and afterwards the evangelists betook themselves to their old studies. The catastrophe was averted; but no one could tell what the hours of waiting in the forest had cost Coillard.

As he came near the end the thought of his own people in France was much with him. The early scenes were for him, as for all who reach old age, the most lucid of all; "he saw with love most passionate" the village of Asnières in the fair land of France. True to his lifelong purpose he pleaded with some of his younger kinsfolk to accept Christ. For religious forms he had little use; it was the change of heart that mattered. Not he who says "Lord, Lord," but he that does the will of the Father, enters the kingdom. The same way must be trodden in France, as in Barotseland.

To some Apostles of the Faith there has been granted a quiet eventide in their own country, surrounded by tender and grateful friends; with their children and their children's children around them, they have spent the last watch. Such an end came to Robert Moffat and to Eugène Casalis. To others no respite is permitted. Martyn, Livingstone, Chalmers, and a great host of modern apostles enjoyed no quiet evening. They died in harness. Coillard had prayed that this might be his lot, and he had his prayer. Shortly before his last sickness he wrote that in three years he would have finished fifty years in Africa. His career was behind him now; he wished he could begin it anew, but with all his accumulated experience! But so long as

he was free to serve his Lord among his Africans, he would not choose any other lot; and this remained true, though towards the close his horror deepened at the corruption which he saw around him, a corruption in which some of the whites set the example. Not for peace did he pray, but to go out of the fight with his sword unsheathed; and to rest with his bright beloved.

Nor had he any triumph on which his eyes could rest at the end. All he could do in the midst of apparent failure was to grapple his soul to some sure word of God. His last look on earth was upon a scene of failure, still unredeemed. His comfort came not from any evidence in his own station of victory, but from the abiding promises of his faithful Lord. The far horizon was radiant, the near wrapped in mist. The worst seemed indeed to have passed; the evangelists had come back. Nevertheless Coillard died troubled by the thought of failure. But for him it was possible to say:

Though Thy every gift were lost
Thee Thyself we could not lose.

Lewanika did not come, though Coillard longed to see him and have one more battle for his soul. He sent to make enquiries, nothing more. But around him his faithful comrades were gathered, and when the news of his sickness spread, the warm-hearted Barotse gathered around the mission house. The watchers sang the hymn—"Sur toi je me repose" (On Thee my soul reposes); and it was to music that he went down to the river, compassed about with the familiar songs of deliverance.

At the head of his last wishes he had written these lines in 1903 :

> On the threshold of eternity and in the presence of my God, I solemnly bequeath to the Churches of France, my native land, the responsibility of the Lord's work in Barotseland, and I adjure them, in His Holy Name, never to give it up—which would be to despise and renounce the rich harvest reserved to the sowing they have accomplished in suffering and tears.

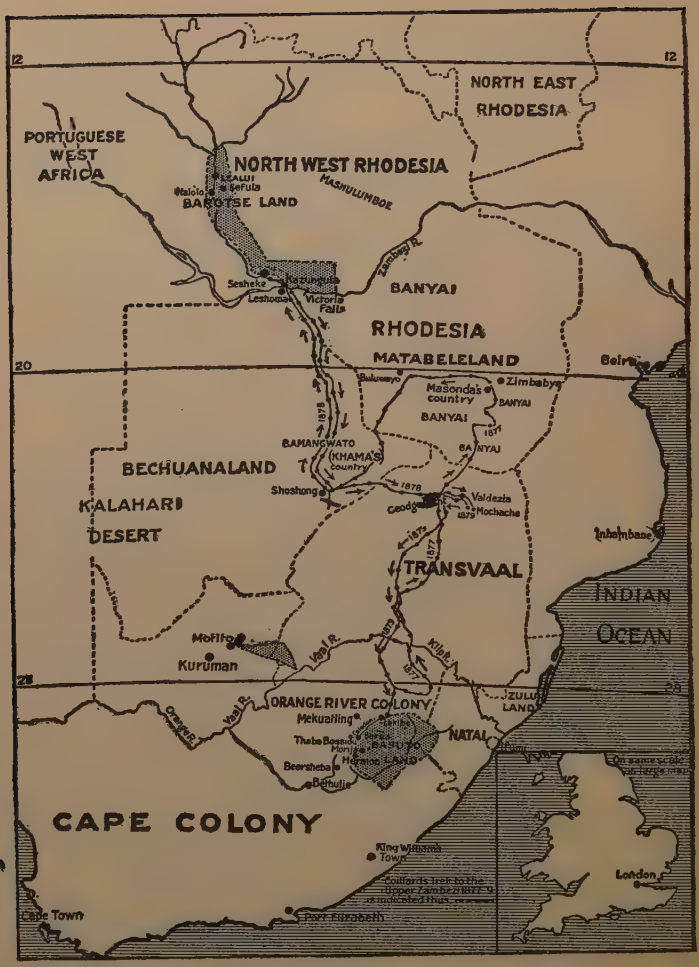
. . . . . .

Coillard died in 1904 with a faith undimmed in the ultimate triumph of Christ, but with a heart oppressed by the failure of so many of his hopes. In 1921 there was an assembly of the Barotse—two thousand in number with the representatives of the British Protectorate and the merchants; the king Litia, who is a Christian, was presenting to the assembly the new Prime Minister. These were his words :

> What was our country? A little land, unknown, delivered over to disorder and anarchy, hastening us to ruin. If we have not perished, to whom do we owe it? To the missionaries. You have been instructed by them. That which is important for us to do above all things is to hold fast to the gift which has saved us, the Gospel of God. It is that which has given us peace. It is the Gospel which has made us live.

Under a great tree near Sefula where Coillard and Christina loved to picnic, there are two crosses which mark their last resting-place. On a stone between the two there is inscribed in French :

To live, is Christ.



SOUTH AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Showing the places mentioned in this book, and Coillard's Trek to the Upper Zambezi in 1877-9

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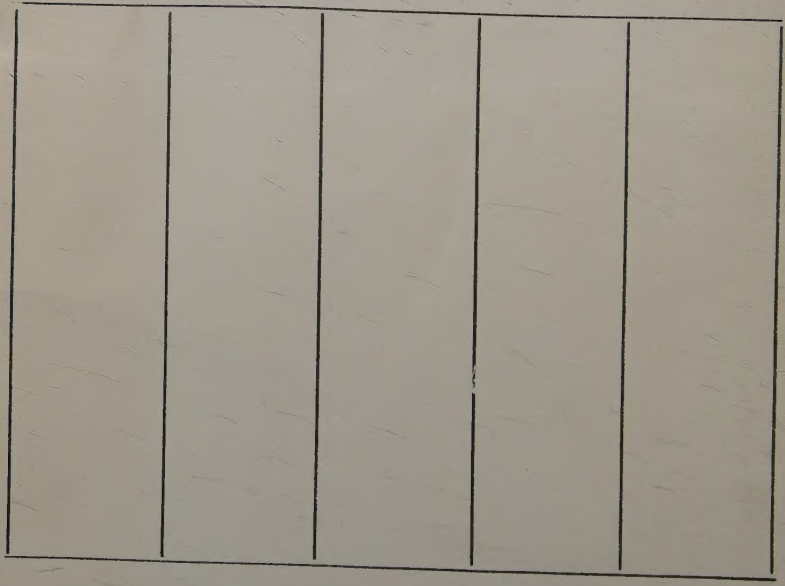

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